School Trust: Situated to maximise school improvement

A case study of a primary school

A thesis submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Law, Education, Business, and Arts
School of Education
Charles Darwin University
Northern Territory
Australia
September 2012
Declaration

I hereby declare that the work herein, now submitted as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Charles Darwin University, is the result of my own investigations, and all references to ideas and work of other researchers have been specifically acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Signed:

[Signature]

6 September 2012
Jennifer Helen ROBINSON
Abstract

School Trust: Situated to maximise school improvement
A case study of a Primary School

This study aims to investigate a Northern Australian primary school’s working definition of trust, and how the community constructs trust, initially through the two-part research questions: What is trust? and How is trust constructed? Through the data analysis process, two research sub questions have emerged: What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement? and What impact do rights and obligations have on trust?

Ethnographic techniques and a number of qualitative methods within a constructivist theoretical frame are used in the study design. Sixty semi-structured interviews formed the basis of the empirical data that were collected over a two year period from the single case study site. Students, parents, and staff afforded an in-depth perspective of the ways participants made decisions to trust or not to trust and how the school collectively constructed trust. Three phases of analyses—Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory and Membership Categorisation Analysis—rendered significant findings for schools and the national improvement agenda.

This study has identified Situated trust, Role trust, and School trust as tentative theory that directly informs school practice. Conclusions and the implications for policy, practice, and further research provide a start to operationalising these significant findings. The role of trust in all schools is widely recognised by academics, governments, administrators of education departments, and the general public as important. However, recognising this is
only the beginning. Unless leaders do more than merely name trust in documents, there will be little change.
Acknowledgements

This PhD journey was supported by a fabulous professional team: Professor Ian Falk, Associate Professor John Guenther and Associate Professor Ruth Wallace. Each member of this team afforded me outstanding mentoring: the right amount of support at the right time. Their scaffolding contributed to my research capacity building and together we experienced a collective confidence that contributes to increased output and shared understandings.

Sincere appreciation is extended to all my supervisors. Your skills knowledge and experience, all varied yet so complementary supported me to this stage in the process. Your support is both outstanding and timely, situated in the constraints of my world of work and emerging research skills. The standard set by all my supervisors deserves recognition and emulation.

I thank the Department of Education and Training (DET), in particular Professor Kevin Gillan, for their support. At the school level, unless the staff, students, and parents of the host school supported the research process, this learning would not have progressed. Thank you. There are many individuals to whom I owe thanks. A special appreciation is extended to Susan Kilgour who afforded me the space to explore this project more fully in its final stages.

To my wonderful family—my husband, Peter, daughter Jessica and her partner Henry, my son Anthony and my mother Dorothy—thank you all for your acceptance of this huge undertaking and your unrelenting encouragement over the years.
Thanks are expressed to my friends who supported me. Your acceptance of my isolation in the final six months is appreciated.

And finally, my PhD is dedicated to my father, Tony Green, who prematurely passed away at the age of 52 in 1978. Sadly, he never commenced his aspiration: Master of Civil Engineering.
Contents

DECLARATION .................................................................................................................. I
ABSTRACT ......................................................................................................................... I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................... III
CONTENTS ........................................................................................................................... V
FIGURES AND TABLES ..................................................................................................... VIII

CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION ...................................................................................... 1
  1.1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 SIGNIFICANCE ........................................................................................................... 2
    1.2.1 High Staff turnover ............................................................................................ 3
    1.2.2 Comparison of schools using NAPLAN data ....................................................... 3
    1.2.3 Cost of decline in trust of the public school system ............................................ 3
    1.2.4 The values of Australian parents ......................................................................... 5
  1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM ................................................................................... 7
    1.3.1 Aims ................................................................................................................... 9
    1.3.2 Research Questions .......................................................................................... 10
    1.3.3 The research site ............................................................................................... 11
  1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN ................................................................................................ 12
  1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT STUDY ............................................................. 18
  1.6 SUMMARY OF THESIS CHAPTERS ...................................................................... 22
    1.6.1 Chapter 1: Orientation ...................................................................................... 22
    1.6.2 Chapter 2: Literature review .............................................................................. 22
    1.6.3 Chapter 3: Methodology .................................................................................... 23
    1.6.4 Chapter 4: Results and discussion .................................................................... 23
    1.6.5 Chapter 5: Summary, conclusion and implications ............................................ 24

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE .................................................................... 27
  2.1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................... 27
  2.2 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT .......................................................................................... 28
    2.2.1 Parent dissatisfaction with public schools ......................................................... 30
    2.2.2 Breakdown in community social capital .............................................................. 33
    2.2.3 Education achievement results correspond with GDP ........................................ 38
    2.2.4 Principals’ influence on learning outcomes ......................................................... 40
    2.2.5 Trust improves student achievement outcomes .................................................. 44
  2.3 SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH ON TRUST IN EDUCATION ........................................ 46
    2.3.1 Hay and Tschannen-Moran ................................................................................ 47
    2.3.2 Bryk and Schneider ............................................................................................ 52
    2.3.3 Robinson ........................................................................................................... 60
  2.4 MULTIDISCIPLINARY TRUST THEORIES ............................................................... 63
    2.4.1 Social capital .................................................................................................... 64
    2.4.2 Definitions of social trust .................................................................................. 70
    2.4.3 Ethnomethodology ............................................................................................ 87
    2.4.4 Culture ............................................................................................................. 90
    2.4.5 Trust and children ............................................................................................. 93
  2.5 SUMMARY ................................................................................................................ 93

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .............................................................................. 95
  3.1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................... 95
  3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ............................................................................... 96
3.2.1 The Researcher: Phase One ................................................................. 98
3.2.2 Interpretive paradigms: Phase Two .................................................... 106
3.2.3 Strategies of inquiry and interpretive paradigms: Phase Three ....................... 114
3.3 METHODS OF COLLECTING AND ANALYSING PROCEDURES: PHASE FOUR ................................................................. 129
3.3.1 Stage One: Data collection ................................................................ 131
3.3.2 Stage Two: Data analysis .................................................................... 159
3.3.3 Stage Three: Reflections and outcomes .............................................. 174
3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY ........................................................................... 181

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ............................................. 183

4.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................... 183
4.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS .......................................................................... 184
4.2.1 Thematic Analysis: (a) Initial coded categories ..................................... 184
4.2.2 Thematic Analysis: (b) Condensed themes .......................................... 187
4.2.3 Description of the eight condensed themes ......................................... 190
4.2.4 Thematic Analysis: (c) Deconstruction ................................................ 217
4.3 GROUNDED THEORY .......................................................................... 235
4.3.1 Grounded Theory: (a) Thematic convergence .................................... 236
4.3.2 Grounded Theory: (b) Construction of vignettes ................................. 245
4.4 MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY ANALYSIS ............................................... 263
4.4.1. Parents ......................................................................................... 264
4.4.2 Students ......................................................................................... 283
4.4.3 Staff ............................................................................................... 290
4.4.4 Principal ......................................................................................... 293
4.5 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT RESULTS ............................................ 295
4.5.1 What is trust? ................................................................................. 296
4.5.2 How is trust constructed? ................................................................. 298
4.5.3 What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement? .................................................. 299
4.5.4 What impact do rights and obligations have on trust? ........................... 300

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION ..................... 303

5.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................... 303
5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS ................................................................... 303
5.3 SYNTHESIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION .................................... 304
5.3.1 Similarities ...................................................................................... 304
5.3.2 Difference ....................................................................................... 309
5.3.3 Summary of synthesis ...................................................................... 312
5.4 FINDINGS ............................................................................................. 314
5.4.1 Finding 1: What is trust? ................................................................... 314
5.4.2 Finding 2: To trust or not to trust? ..................................................... 315
5.4.3 Finding 3: Situated trust elements ..................................................... 316
5.4.4 Finding 4: Constructing trust ............................................................ 316
5.4.5 Finding 5: Conditions that promote Situated trust .............................. 316
5.4.6 Finding 6: Principal’s role is central to trust conditions ...................... 317
5.4.7 Finding 7: Mistrust is a lack of confidence ........................................ 318
5.4.8 Finding 8: Reliable role obligations builds trust ............................... 318
5.4.9 Finding 9: Trusting relationships permeate all aspects of trust ............ 319
5.4.10 Finding 10: Safety impacts on learning ........................................... 320
5.4.11 Finding 11: Trust norms—Relationships, Reliability, and Reciprocity ...... 320
5.4.12 Finding 12: Emotional safety supports school improvement ................ 320
5.4.13 Finding 13: Decision making is specific to situations ........................ 321
5.5 CONCLUSIONS .................................................................................... 321
5.5.1 Trust is situated in time, place and people: Situated trust .................... 322
5.5.2 Trust is a component of school culture: School trust ......................... 323
5.5.3 Trust is based on role rights and obligations: Role trust ........................ 325
5.5.4 School Leadership with trust is at the heart of school change ............... 325
Figures and Tables

Figures

Figure 1 Five phases of the research process ................................................................. 14
Figure 2 Four quadrants of trust-distrust complex ......................................................... 77
Figure 3 Stages 1 and 2 within Phase Four of the research design ................................. 130
Figure 4 Semi-structured interview questions for adults ................................................. 150
Figure 5 Semi-structured interview questions for children .............................................. 151
Figure 6 Number of references and coded categories per cohort .................................... 186
Figure 7 Sources and frequency of references per condensed theme ................................ 188
Figure 8 Frequency of sources in stakeholder group per condensed theme ...................... 188
Figure 9 Frequency of sources in stakeholder group per condensed theme ...................... 189
Figure 10 Understanding trust: frequency of participant’s comments .............................. 218
Figure 11 Reliability: reference frequency ........................................................................ 219
Figure 12 Relationships: reference frequency ................................................................. 220
Figure 13 Integrity: reference frequency .......................................................................... 222
Figure 14 Openness: reference frequency ....................................................................... 224
Figure 15 Competence: reference frequency .................................................................... 225
Figure 16 Keeping confidence: reference frequency ....................................................... 226
Figure 17 Feeling Safe: reference frequency .................................................................... 227
Figure 18 Feel of trust: reference frequency ..................................................................... 229
Figure 19 Reciprocity: reference frequency (or believing in others) ................................. 230
Figure 20 Respect: reference frequency .......................................................................... 231
Figure 21 Situated context: reference frequency .............................................................. 232
Figure 22 Condensing pathway: Trust environments ...................................................... 237
Figure 23 Condensing to five themes representing a trusting school environment .......... 241
Figure 24 Results of the sum of references per theme made by participants ................... 242
Figure 25 Condensed Understanding of trust .................................................................... 243
Figure 26 Student data about how the school constructs trust ......................................... 243
Figure 27 Staff data showing how the school constructs trust ........................................... 244
Figure 28 Parent data showing how the school constructs trust ........................................ 245
Figure 29 SRPs of the MCD of trust spoken by parents .................................................... 265
Figure 30 Professional SRPs spoken about ...................................................................... 266
Figure 31 Reference to secrets made by students, staff, and parents ............................... 284
Figure 32 Analysis of who first raised the word "secret" during the interview .................... 285
Tables

Table 1 Data report ................................................................. 152
Table 2 Sum of each stakeholder group according to the descriptions .......... 185
Table 3 Number of participants who spoke about the converged theme .......... 190
Table 4 What is trust? .................................................................. 297
Table 5 School conditions that support trust ............................................. 299
Table 6 Leadership impact on trust, learning, and school improvement .......... 300
School Trust: Situated to maximise school improvement

A case study of a primary school

Chapter One: Orientation
Chapter One: Orientation

1.1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate a Northern Australian primary school’s working definition of trust, and how the community constructs trust, initially through the two-part research questions: What is trust? and How is trust constructed? Through the data analysis process, two research sub questions emerge: What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement? and What impact do rights and obligations have on trust? The school will be known by its pseudonym, the “Vivaldi School”. Education literature posits the importance of trust as a vital aspect of social relationships and learning. Readings and research on the subject of communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) also identify trust as an essential component. Researchers identify the importance of trust in a range of contexts (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Fukuyama 1995; Hardin 2002, 2004, 2006; Hollis 1998; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran 1999; Kochanek 2005; Kohn 2008; Kramer 2004; Kramer 2006; Lee et al. 2010; Luhmann, Niklas 2000; Marty 2010; Misztal 1996; Möllering 2001; Mitchell et al. 2011; Möllering 2006; Newell & Swan 2000; Ostrom & Walker 2003; Robinson 2007; Sztompka 1999, 2004, p. 73). However, evidence presented therein reveals a pervasive perception amongst communities that trust is decreasing in some quarters. This socio political backdrop is explored as the thesis investigates how the Vivaldi School community recognises and constructs trust, within the context of its broader social and political landscape.
This study originally set out with the proposition that little is known about the effect of trust on student learning outcomes. However, through analysis of the literature, a number of significant studies demonstrate this connection. Tschannen-Moran (2004) summarises this by saying:

Trust matters because it hits schools in their bottom line; it makes a difference in student achievement...Trust pays dividends in helping schools succeed at fulfilling their mission to be productive, professional learning communities (Tschannen-Moran 2004 p. 188).

Regrettably, despite international recognition, these studies appear to have limited impact on the contemporary Australian schooling policy and decision agendas. In particular, with the increased national centralisation of all aspects of schooling, there is limited reference to trust and how schools can promote this important element. For without trust, “people divert their energies into self-protection and away from learning” (Mitchell et al. 2011 p. 11), resulting in self-fulfilling survival as opposed to collective improvement.

1.2 Significance

This study seeks to identify how students, parents and teachers in a school environment understand trust; and to identify what supports and what undermines trust at the micro and macro levels. The significance of this is that this information can be used to foster greater trust, and greater trustworthiness within the school environment which is needed at this time of declining trust of and within public schools.
1.2.1 High Staff turnover

Trust is currently being undermined by high staff turnover. High turnover of school staff leads to frustration, constant orientation of new staff, a lack of continuity, and a reduction in the quality of educational programs. Thus staff turnover undermines trust in the school’s ability to educate. Thus the significance of this study lies in part in addressing the questions of how a school culture characterised by trust can be established within the context of high staff turnover. Additionally, this study may be used to support increased attention to the problem of staff retention across the Top End and regional Australia.

1.2.2 Comparison of schools using NAPLAN data

An important contributor to the breakdown in trust may stem from the measurement by the Australian Government and the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) of school improvement using the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data. Based on data from NAPLAN schools are publicly ranked and compared. However NAPLAN provides a very narrow assessment of a school’s progress and fails to provide any context for the results. This oversimplified assessment of the complex business of education, may lead to misperceptions and misjudgements and thus undermine trust. Exploration of the ways in which NAPLAN data and the public comparison of schools affects trust may contribute to important changes in the measurement and comparison of schools’ improvement.

1.2.3 Cost of decline in trust of the public school system

The significance of this study also lies in the fact that trust within schools and of schools, is an important political issue with extensive ramifications for all of society. High turnover of school staff leads to frustration of relentless orientation and the lack of continuity impacts on the quality of educational programs. Trust is observed to develop over time and with the
movement of staff in and out of the school, trust is perceived as fragmented. Another tension comes from the Australian Government and the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET). School improvement, measured by the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data, was becoming a major discussion point and eventually leading to public school comparison based on the NAPLAN data. At the international level, evidence correlating cognitive competence with nation economic wealth (Hunt & Wittmann, 2008) supported a global interest in education. Countries that previously ranked low on international comparable data on student achievement, such as South Korea, continue to make substantial gains which adds increasing pressure to the apparent “decline” in Australia’s international ranking. At the school level, questions about trust and distrust were cited by school staff. On the one hand educational literature espoused the importance of trust yet schools were being judged on NAPLAN results which are a narrow assessment of the complex business of schools. The question asked here is how to espouse and authentically develop a trusting school culture within the reality of high staff turnover and a systemic judgement of NAPLAN results in a small Northern Australian Primary School? Will a clearer understanding of trust support the improvement of student learning outcomes? It is hoped that this study will provide use to other schools as staff retention issues, due to isolation and skill shortage, are somewhat typical across the Top end and regional Australia. The demographics, while similar, were not well captured in this study as many Indigenous students and parents chose not to participate. Given the methodological and ethical nature of conducting research, freewill is paramount and in this case, an alternative method of capturing the Indigenous “voice” is required in future research of this nature.

The significance of trust in relation to this research is situated in three time periods. The first of these is when the project is theoreticalised: 2004 the Howard Government stated
that many parents were concerned about the quality of Australian schools. The Government perceived the Australian public to be losing confidence in public schools (Campbell 2005). Since 1984, the numbers of children attending private schools in “Australia have risen steadily, at an average rate of 0.4 per cent per annum” (Wilkinson et al. 2004, p. 4). There has been a corresponding steady decline in government school student numbers (Caldwell & Harris 2008). This study will contribute to an understanding of the causes of these trends by identifying what bolsters and what undermines the public’s trust of the public school system. The study may then contribute to reversing such trends.

1.2.4 The values of Australian parents

Trust in schools is potentially undermined when schools are perceived by parents to be failing to instil the parents’ values in the students. In the context of the decline in enrolments at Australian public schools the Prime Minister suggested that public schools neglected Australian values. The Minister for Education, the Hon Brendan Nelson argued:

Australian parents, more than ever, are expecting schools to foster values such as tolerance, trust, mutual respect, courage, compassion, honesty, courtesy and doing one’s best...Every Australian child needs to have an understanding of values as part of their schooling. Schools can support our democratic way of life by helping students to be active and informed citizens. A values free education risks producing values-free adults (Nelson 2004).

Parents actively searched for schools that provided non-denominational Christian values and the “right cultural capital” (English 2009, p. 90). Wilkinson et al. (2004) report that an Australian study found that “values” comprised the most important of six social factors given for leaving the government schools. Those factors include prestige, tradition, religion, values, discipline and peer group. In an attempt to promote values education in every
SCHOOL TRUST: SITUATED TO MAXIMISE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Australian school the Howard Government researched the effect of values in schools before mandating the government’s values (DEST 2006). These perceptions resulted in an Australian Values Education project designed to implement values into the school curriculum and culture. This significant political action resulted in the Vivaldi School commencing the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project (VEGPSP) (DEEWR 2010). The two year project (2004–2006) involved extensive community collaboration—student, staff and parent—which resulted in five school values that were collectively called the “Hand”. These five values, which are displayed on each of the Hand’s appendages, are: (1) communicating effectively, (2) accepting others, (3) showing respect, (4) acting responsibly, and (5) caring and encouraging. The five values are underpinned by the accompanying new school motto “personal best” (see Appendix 3). Collectively, these qualities engendered a culture of trust—“building a healthy climate” (Adams 2008, p. 36). The approach taken by the Principal and Assistant Principal and subsequent staff and School Council, was to model transparent decision-making and encourage open and honest conversations about “everyday” school life, such as explaining why an additional yard duty is required, as well as the more “challenging” and less popular issues. Part of the significance of this study then lies in its exploration of whether the adoption of these values built trust in parents of the school and whether they contributed to better student outcomes.

The significance of this study is far reaching. By exploring the relationship between trust and: staff turnover; public comparisons of schools’ literacy and numeracy scores; changes in enrolments at public schools; and the teaching of human values, important information can be garnered that can contribute to changes imperative to the continued advancement of the Australian educational system.
1.3 Statement of problem

While the literature refers to the important role of trust in establishing a safe and collegial learning environment, students, parents, and staff find trust hard to define. This project seeks to investigate the working definition of “trust” in an urban primary school. A clear contemporary understanding of trust will enable educational leaders to cultivate this important element. Knowing more about the elements of trust may assist communities of practice to manufacture and sustain trust to enhance the overall outcomes of the school and improve student learning outcomes. On learning, Wenger (1998) argues that:

[Communities of practice] share their competence with new generations through a version of the same process by which they develop. Special measures may be taken to open the practice to newcomers, but the process of learning is not essentially different (Wenger 1998, p. 102).

The role that trust plays in learning and change processes is investigated in an inductive manner so the precise inquiry question is general in the early stages of this research—see section 1.3.2 Research Questions. Before this, some definitions of trust are presented prior to examining the contemporary environment in which this research is situated.

Fukuyama (1995) categorised Japanese, American and German cultures, into “low trust” and “high trust” societies. The role of the family is an important cultural component in developing “habits of trust”. Fukuyama found that, “Trust is the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of the community” (p. 26). These habits are based on social norms, “rather than individual virtues”. The interplay of social capital on the development of trust is explored by Putnam (1995; 1993, 2000). He identifies two kinds of
social capital: bonding capital and bridging capital. Bonding occurs when individuals socialise with individuals through shared aspects such as age, values, and so on. Peaceful communities also require bridging capital where unlike individuals associate through formal legal and institutional processes. Putnam asserts that both forms of social capital are necessary and this research may find new connections between social capital and trust. The question of the role of shared norms in the development of trust in a school community requires consideration during the fieldwork phase. Argyris et al. (1985) examine the theory of individual’s “espoused theories” and their “actual behaviours”; though, connections with trust have not been shown. However, close examination of this connection and individual credibility and trust when the espoused theories match up, or do not, with the actual behaviour are worth considering. It was reported by Zucker (1986) that the increased “institutionalised based trust” has resulted from a vacuum created by an erosion of family and community relations. Increased emphasis on individualism and a movement away from a pluralistic society appears to be a factor in the trust process.

The manner in which trust is cultivated is less clear. Despite a growing body of research on communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and social capital (Guenther & Falk 2006; Hardin 2006), the meaning of trust is still diverse (Castelfranchi & Falcone 2010; Kramer 2006; Seligman 1997). There is insufficient detail as to what trust actually is and how it can be developed in the school. Two significant studies on trust in North American schools (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Tschannen-Moran 2004) have provided a guide to solving part of the research problem. Bryk and Schneider (2002) constructed a Grounded Theory that describes “distinctive qualities of interpersonal social exchanges in school communities, and how these culminate in an organisational property...term relational trust” (p. 12). This study was continued in an extended manner by Bryk et al. (2010). A second significant school study, drawing on the work of Hoy applied the definition that “Trust is one’s
willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent” (Tschannen-Moran 2004, p. 17; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 1998, 2000). Further work is presented on the above Five facets of trust by Forsyth, Adams and Hoy (2011). A summary of these two significant findings are discussed in Chapter Two, section 2.3, Significant research on trust in education.

1.3.1 Aims

This study aims to investigate a Northern Australian primary school’s working definition of trust, and how the community constructs trust. This chapter positions this study within the contemporary education environment within a strong international, Territory and school improvement agenda. While the research field is a single case study, it is expected that the conclusions drawn from the study can be broadened and applied to urban primary schools across Australia and beyond.

This study is anticipated to identify key issues and relationships of trust through the Australian contemporary educational landscape. Integrating the relevant literature on trust through this Australian lens and applying research results will help describe and identify the conditions needed to develop trustworthy school environments. Further, identifying factors that directly optimise universal strategies for trust creation may assist school leaders, parent–School Councils, Student Representative Councils, Indigenous groups, Departments of Education and Tertiary Educators to better understand school trust and develop methods to improve trust.

The objectives of the research involve an examination of current understandings of trust in a primary school setting and the identification of changes that can be introduced to schools
to improve the quality of the teaching and learning environment for students. Such information has the potential to be useful in several ways:

- Firstly, with an emphasis on intervention, or the process through which feedback to the school staff and DET will create change, it could assist school Principals to provide a learning environment which maximise an understanding of trust and how to build trustworthy environments.
- Secondly, it could assist teachers to enhance the influencing factors that help develop trust and as a result enhance wellbeing and minimise the influence of negative factors on students.
- Thirdly, it could assist parents in the understanding of trust, how the school fosters it and how parents can support the home–school partnership.
- Fourthly, it can help educators better meet the needs of Indigenous students. Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) research has shown how relational trust has helped marginalised students in Chicago. It is hoped that this study can find ways to improve Indigenous student outcomes through trusting school relationships.

1.3.2 Research Questions

This study aims to investigate a Northern Australian primary school’s working definition of trust, and how the community constructs trust, initially through the two-part research questions:

1. What is trust?
2. How is trust constructed?

Through the data analysis process, two research sub questions have emerged:

3. What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement?
4. What impact do rights and obligations have on trust?
1.3.3 The research site

The setting is a single case study, geographically bounded by place and time (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007, p. 73). There are five reasons for selecting the Vivaldi School site. The first reason is that the researcher of this project was closely involved with the Vivaldi School during the research (2005–2011), and as a result held significant in-depth relationships with staff, students, and parents. Prior to joining the school community, it was noted that many teachers and leaders, including the Principal, stayed for relatively short periods of time. Counter to this, was a core of staff who had witnessed these changeovers for more than 10 years and were skilled at “managing” the short term school change brought about with each new Principal. One of the consequences of the instability of leadership meant that levels of trust and confidence were low. This has not been measured; rather, it is a perception held by the researcher of this study. Secondly, the researcher had also made a commitment to the School Council to provide leadership continuity and build trust and confidence, and a range of other attributes that support a well-functioning school. Thirdly, to assist in meeting this commitment, the researcher decided to embark on a research higher degree, based at the school, to help maintain ongoing commitment to the school. The fourth reason was that the researcher had unlimited access to the research site. Finally, Vivaldi School was typical of many Northern Australian urban schools, characterised by cross-cultural staff, students, and parents; valuing, including and advocating equal respect of people, regardless of their cultural practices and religion. Central to embracing cultural difference was a recent Values Project (VEGPSP) (DEEWR 2010, p. 2) that involved staff, students, and parents in recognising common values and establishing guiding school values to inform inclusive behaviour. Thus encouraging both bonding and bridging capital throughout the school to deepen connections and positive relationships and wellbeing.
In order to set the parameters of the study, one primary school was selected as likely to contain a realistic representativeness of Indigenous and multicultural students of Northern Australian schools. Wolcott (1994, pp. 182–3) emphasises the importance of one research site, as opposed to comparative sites, arguing that one in-depth study can capture important details that are sometimes overlooked by broader multisite cases. This ethnographic study will include the majority of the school community. There are approximately, 220–360 students, 150–200 families, and 30 staff members. Student numbers were in the low 200s in 2004, and have risen above 380. Parents in Northern Australia may choose their child’s school—public or private—as no “catchment” zones are enforced as is often the case elsewhere in Australia. In relation to the research site, the School Leadership Team strategically worked to counter the increasing community move to the private sector. One of these strategies was to participate in the Australian Government’s Phase one Values Project (VEGPSP) (DEST 2006) and the five values embodied in the Hand written about earlier are the product of the trial. Relational trust (Bryk & Schneider 2002) is also a key quality held by staff members, parents, and students and is encouraged.

1.4 Research design

The theoretical decisions that frame every aspect of this project are based on the held ontological (nature of reality and truth) and epistemological (theory of knowledge and its justification) paradigms of the researcher. Ontologically relativist which denies the existence of an objective reality, “asserting instead that realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exist as many such constructions as there are individuals [although noticeably many constructions are shared]” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 43). Epistemologically subjectivist, rejecting notions of objectivity where orientation is a constructivist one: where the relationship between researcher and participant, and the field is jointly constructed.
These beliefs lead to a constructivist standpoint which adopted processes that recognise multiple individual realities which influences and is influenced by participants of the research site. These epistemological beliefs inform methodological selection of theoretical sensitivity, sampling, treatment of the literature, constant comparative methods, coding, the meaning of verification, identifying themes, reflexivity, analysis processes—Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory, and Membership Category Analysis—and the measure of rigor. Conclusions or resolutions are not quickly reached. Rather, patterns are looked for and identified based on the perceived view of the nature of truth and reality. This recognises that all are influenced by history and cultural context, which shape the view of the world and the meaning of truth. Recognising that often these underlying assumptions are about the world, are unconscious and taken for granted (Schein 2010).

This research is designed in five phases and these are briefly introduced so that the context of the project is positioned. Further elaboration on the methodological decision-making takes place in Chapter Three (section, 3.2). Essentially, this framework is an adaptation of Denzin and Lincoln’s (2003; 2011a) research design and forms the backbone of this study, providing a consistent thread throughout. The thesis plan is visually represented Figure one below.
Five phases of research design used in this research are based on what Denzin and Lincoln (2005a, p. 21; Denzin & Lincoln 2011, pp. 11–5) call the “traditions” which refer to generic characteristics of qualitative research that have developed and improved over years. They posit that, “each work tradition is governed by a different set of genres, and each has its own classic, its own preferred forms of representation, interpretation, trustworthiness, and textual evaluation” (2011a, p. 10). In this thesis, “traditions” is generically acknowledging the social and cultural history as a backdrop, “characterised by diversity and conflict” and, within the limitations of this thesis, craft decisions made specifically for this study (p. 12).

The rationale for each of the five phases, based on the constructivst paradigm, follow.

Chapter sections (from section 3.2.1 The Researcher: Phase One) describe each of the five phases. Each phase is interdependent one on the other, requiring planning, and checking throughout each phase of the process. An example of this is the description of the research in Phase One, The researcher: this phase continues throughout the research as it pertains to the role of the researcher—as research “instrument”. The interdependent nature of this phase impacts on the research throughout.

Phase One (see 3.2.1 The Researcher: Phase One) orientates the research, describing the researcher as being “socially situated” (in the context of sum of life experiences) in relation
to the research. Issues that shape the researcher’s decision-making are based on experience, skills, and knowledge of all the factors that influence the research design. This phase impacts on all aspects of decision-making: conceptions of self and others, the design, data collection, ethics, analysis and reporting. “These traditions locate the researcher in history, simultaneously guiding and constructing the work that is done in any specific study” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005a, p. 22). The term “project” as a noun, refers to everything about this PhD thesis. “Research”, as a verb, refers to the actions required to do the project. The “researcher” is the person who designed, implemented, analysed, and evaluated the project. Reflexivity is used throughout as an essential process for qualitative research. Johnson and Christensen (2011) describe reflexivity as follows: “the researcher actively engages in critical self-reflection about his or her potential biases and predispositions” (p. 265). Through reflexivity, Rosen (2000) posits that social constructive researchers become more self-aware, and “deconstruct borders” between themselves and their subjects, demonstrating “a willingness and capacity on the part of the researcher to drift and reformulate in the research site [constructing their conceptions which are] applied and tested against the data collected” (p. 48). Phase One frames and guides the project from start to finish. All the decisions made in the project reflect the socially situated researcher: mother, wife, white, Australian, and experienced senior educator associated with the Vivaldi School.

Phase Two (see 3.2.2 Interpretive paradigms: Phase Two)—the interpretive paradigms—also influences all decisions made in relation to this study. The interpretive paradigms or philosophical framework, presents the study’s ontology (what is reality), epistemology (in terms of the relationship between the inquirer and the known), and the methodology (how to gain the required knowledge). Denzin and Lincoln (2005a, p. 22) argue that these paradigms or beliefs shape and guide all aspects of the design of the qualitative inquiry.
Within the four main paradigms—Positive/postpositive, Constructivist/interpretive, Critical/Marxist/emancipator, Feminist-poststructural), this research is “bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which—regardless of ultimate truth or falsity—become partially self-validating” (Bateson 1972, p. 314). The constructivist theoretical framework adopted in this project believes, for example, the reality is constructed depending on the context of time, place, and perspective. This also assumes a subjective epistemology that designs methodology to collect data in the natural setting. With the constructivist paradigm established within the researcher’s “situated self”, the research strategies are selected.

Phase Three’s research strategies (see 3.2.3 Strategies of inquiry and interpretive paradigms: Phase Three) are specifically applied to answer the research questions. They are also applied to other important aspects such as considering the limitations of these strategies, and the methods applied to minimise these. Considering the nature of the question, the research site and the Phase One and Two research “traditions”, a number of methods are selected: single case study, ethnography, and Grounded Theory. A number of methods are strategically selected to enable a range of methods to study and interpret the complex phenomenon of trust.

Denzin and Lincoln argue that:

No single method can grasp all the subtle variations in ongoing human experiences. Consequently, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, always, seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience they have studied (Denzin & Lincoln 2005a, p. 21).
It has been affirmed that ethnography is a well-recognised research methodology for empirical data gathering (Fetterman 2010). Merriam (2009) says that, “Ethnography strives to understand the interaction of individuals not just with others, but also with the culture of society in which they live” (p. 23). Ethnographic research is rich in meaning, it is context-bound. The Vivaldi School is a single case study that provides the prerequisites for an in-depth investigation. The methods employed guide the researcher in capturing data from a particular group of people as they interact in their natural setting. Due to this localised analysis and the close proximity in which the researcher works with the participants, the researcher is in a position to authentically record the voices of the participants. The researcher’s reflexive and critical appraisal during the research process assists by ensuring the “sensitivity and integrity of the investigator” (Merriam 2009, p. 52). Within the single case study Grounded Theory is used—a contemporary constructivist approach reviewed and further developed by Charmaz (2006)—adopting an inductive research method suited to complex and inter connected social phenomenon such as trust.

Phase Four (3.3 Methods of collecting and analysing procedures: Phase Four) is primarily concerned with the methods used to collect and manage empirical materials at the research site. These include details relating to sampling, interviewing, and member checking procedures of the participants: students, staff, and parents. Methods of making meaning from the data such as taking field notes, and seeking clarification from participants after the interview, are planned and applied. After the initial self-selecting sampling method, purposeful participant selection (see section, 3.3.1.3 Data sources: Sampling) was used to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, as well as storing the data electronically within the NVivo 8 software database are used to manage the abundant data. Methods of collecting and analysing materials are central to Chapter Three—and the procedures adopted for the study are described. The three analytical stages are applied:
Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory Analysis, and Membership Categorisation Analysis—are applied and reported on in Chapter Four.

Phase Five is constructive, creative, and political (see Chapter Five: Summary, synthesis and conclusion). Final practices involve writing the interpretation of the project. Field texts are re-created as a working interpretive document to make sense of what is learned. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011a), all researchers speak “within a distinct interpretive community that configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act (p. 11)...always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience they have studied” (p. 12). They also recognise that, “there is no single interpretative truth” (Denzin & Lincoln 2011a, p. 15). Questions that consider the audience and the higher political context are reflected on, and alternatives pondered while reflexively honouring all ethical guidelines and revealing the findings in a manner that meets these obligations. Then a final public text that is both artistic, and political, is written.

In summary, the research processes, as described through five phases, provides the methodological and theoretical framework of the research. In the final part of the study, it will be essential that the results and usefulness of the study to primary school communities, staff, interested parents, and Indigenous peoples are explained and communicated widely to relevant organisations.

1.5 Limitations of the current study

Several limitations to this study need to be acknowledged. These are described in terms of the methodological design constructed and applied to the research. The limitations—ethnography, single case study, participant-observer role of the researcher, and Grounded Theory—are described in the following paragraphs.
It has been argued that ethnography is a well-recognised research methodology for empirical data gathering due to the contextual richness in meaning. While objectivists (e.g.) argue that the data is subjective and not suitable for generalisability, other scholars argue the contrary. Falk and Guenther (2007), claim that in-depth qualitative studies are theory building and as a result may be applied to environments beyond the research site and thus can be generalised. Similarly, limitations of a single case are recognised, though not necessarily by all researchers, due to the contextual nature of the single case site (Merriam 2009; Yin 2003). The focus of single case studies are often an in-depth investigation of the way a particular group of people interact in their natural setting. As with the ethnography, due to this localised analysis, critics argue that the findings are locally generated and hence difficult to generalise beyond the case. Merriam (2009) discusses the heuristic value of the case study report, arguing that the descriptions “illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon…bringing about the discovery of new meaning” (p. 43). Merriam argues, citing Stake (2007), that rethinking of the studied phenomenon call for “naturalistic generalization…a case provides vicarious instances and episodes that merge with existing icons of experience” (p. 44). This means that there is value of an in depth context specific social interpretation is worthy of generalisation into other social settings. Paradoxically, the close proximity in which the researcher works with participants, the greater the challenge to reflect each participant’s point of view and not the researcher’s. This is due to the fact that the researcher is the primary investigator, data collector, and analyser. The necessity for “closeness” (Fetterman 2010) to record the voices of the participants—they are heard and expressed through the researcher’s methodological approach—require that reflexivity and critical appraisal are applied. Merriam (2009, p. 52) states that the limitation to case studies is the “sensitivity and integrity of the investigator” and as a result every case study is unique. Particular sensitivity to the age vulnerability of students, the cross-cultural
setting, and the autobiographical nature of the participant-researcher are also considered.

All efforts have been applied to protect the identity of the participants: through the use of pseudonyms and character “adjustment”. This is not an isolated issue. Wall (2008) presents a similar scenario in which ethical approval is granted, yet by association, the identification of some aspects of the research could be suggested. Other factors that can influence this thinking are concerns about validity and reliability of data collection that are used to generate results. However, considering these above points, applying single case study methods helped reveal the situated nature of trust.

The key feature of data collection, within the ethnography, is the application of the participant-observer, immersed within the research site. This project constructs the research design around the fact that the researcher is a genuine naturalised participant of the Vivaldi School—there is no cultural gap or loss of time as the researcher has already established a relationship with the members of the research site. Anderson and Herr (2009, p. 160) argue that research for administrators, or school Principals, within their school is difficult: issues of power potentially impact on data collection, in particular, face to face interviews. While many protective factors were included, based on ethical guidelines, and including non-coercive sampling techniques, some school members who chose not to participate in the interview may have had different perceptions and experiences to those who volunteered for the interview. Despite the stated interpersonal capabilities and extensive experience as a school leader within the context of Northern Australia, it is reasonable to suggest that people who felt comfortable with the researcher participated and those who did not naturally excluded themselves from the sample. It is noted that outside of the interviews, the researcher primarily acted in a constructivist’s dialogic manner and this contributes to the collective meaning by all participants, including the participant researcher. To help build credibility to the findings, a combination of analyses
have been selected to interrogate and synthesise the data so that the findings may apply beyond the research site.

Indigenous representation in the project was lacking primarily due to the small numbers of participants in two thirds of the cohort: all available Indigenous staff participated; some available Indigenous students participated, though a small number in percentile terms of the whole school student cohort; and of the largest cohort of Indigenous people, the parents, many of them chose not to participate. While Indigenous parents communicate regularly with the researcher on school matters, they did not offer to participate in the interview. This “silence” raises tacit issues of researcher positional power that may have influenced the participants in their decision whether or not to participate. As a result, the study has not captured the Indigenous perspective of the research questions. While processes were employed to capture Indigenous stories using culturally appropriate means, future studies of this nature need additional specific considerations in order to successfully capture Indigenous perspectives.

Grounded Theory is used comprehensively in qualitative research, though not without controversy. Within the Grounded Theory “school of thought” quite divergent views are held by key proponent. This project has purposely applied Charmaz’s (2006) contemporary constructivist approach developed by reflecting an emergent inductive research standpoint. Critics of this approach argue that theories generated from this method are “substantive in character”, reflecting the context from which they are derived and not the broader range of the studied phenomenon (Bryman 2008, p. 549). However, as argued in Chapter Three, Charmaz (2011) provides cogent arguments that support Grounded Theory methods, particularly in relation to complex and inter connected social phenomenon.
1.6 Summary of thesis Chapters

This study set out to determine how the socially complex nature of trust is exhibited and constructed within a specific context, Vivaldi School. Extensive literature on trust with a positivistic stance are valuable, while comparatively fewer studies on school trust have been published, particularly in relation to trust and school improvement. The five thesis chapters gather specific aspects of the research process in such a way to guarantee that all features of the research process are justified and executed: the theoretical paradigm, the empirical substance, and methodological composition. A short summary of each chapter follows.

1.6.1 Chapter 1: Orientation

Chapter One aims to orientate the reader to the rationale of the research, the research design, the research site and prepare the way for the literature review in Chapter Two. Fundamental to this orientation is an appreciation that trust in schools is at the core of school improvement (Bryk & Schneider 2002) and social interaction (Coleman 1990, p. 196).

1.6.2 Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter Two examines the literature related to trust in schools, presented in three main sections. Firstly, it situates this study on trust by examining the contemporary literature relating to school improvement: parent dissatisfaction with public schools, breaking down of community social capital, educational achievement results, the Principal’s influence on learning outcomes, and how trust improves student learning outcomes are examined.

Then, two significant findings on trust in schools (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Tschannen-Moran 2004) and a meta-analysis meta-analysis (Robinson 2007), reporting the positive influence school leaders can have on school improvement are critically examined in relation to the project. Finally, a number of key historical multidisciplinary trust theories are scrutinised.
Research from a psychological and sociological perspective is explained so that these concepts are applied to guide theoretical aspects of the project. Subsequently, these trust understandings are followed by literature that reports declining social trust and a corresponding increase in distrust.

1.6.3 Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter Three describes all aspects of the applied methodology and research methods, situating the researcher’s theoretical framework within the traditions of qualitative design. Methods applied reflect all decisions made from the collection of data through to the analysis and reporting of the findings. Ethical standards are employed and particular approaches to the cross-cultural nature of the research site are presented. Three methodologies applied to make sense of the data are Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory, and Membership Category Analysis.

1.6.4 Chapter 4: Results and discussion

Chapter Four reports on the collected and analysed data using the three categories of analysis: Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory Analysis, and Membership Category Analysis. These steps are organised in a sequential manner that build on each level of interrogation. All three levels of analysis use the data generated from the 60 interviews collected. Each of the three Stages and the Steps within the stages, progressively revealed interconnecting aspects of trust in the Vivaldi School. Some similarities are shown throughout and new insights are identified.

Significantly, the grounded theme of “relationships” cut through all aspects of interaction at the Vivaldi School. Throughout the data from all stakeholders, the connection between
trust and positive relationships is well documented: connecting with others in a supportive way provides opportunities to build trust and apply trust. As with social capital (Putnam 1995; 1993) bonding relationships within groups of similar people enhance wellbeing. The project’s findings confirm relational trust-constructed Grounded Theory as developed by Bryk and Schneider (2002). This finding also supports the Kochanek (2005) publication, based on Bryk and Schneider (2002) that argues that trust is developed in schools through reducing people’s vulnerabilities and thus making people feel at ease (p. 83).

The role of the School Leadership, particularly of the Principal, to create a school culture that supports all participants to feel physically and emotionally safe helps to establish trust creation and maintenance. When the Principal ensures that school policies which support reliability and integrity are explicit and followed up when they are not supported, then School trust extends. Principals who enact appropriate problem-solving processes in which teachers have adequate time to adopt new professional practices enable a supportive and trusting professional culture to grow despite the burden of change. This finding also confirms Putnam’s (1995; 1993) social capital theory of bridging: rules and institutional procedures support trust building in dissimilar or less acquainted groups.

1.6.5 Chapter 5: Summary, conclusion and implications

The final chapter summarises the research as a whole then presents the conclusions and implications for policy, practice, and for further research pertaining to theory, and methodology. The four conclusions relate to trust in schools and are summarised below.

This tentative theory concludes that there is no single meaning for trust upon which the participants in the school act, but the meaning for trust is situated according to time, place and the particular group of participants; students, staff and parents. Situated trust is more
predictable under certain conditions, such as predictable school routines. Finally, the implications for policy, practice, and for further research are summarised and some final reflections are offered to conclude the thesis.
School Trust: Situated to maximise school improvement

A case study of a primary school

Chapter Two: Review of literature
Chapter Two: Review of literature

2.1 Introduction

This second chapter presents three main themes pertaining to the project which was crafted through wide and deep multidisciplinary reading while working at the research site. Reflection on the nature in which trust did and did not occur at the research site, through a constructivist standpoint, in relation to the literature and data, lead to the formation of the trust theoretical framework summary which is finally described at the end of this chapter (section, 2.5). It is noted that many aspects of historical and contemporary research publications are not represented here as they did not contribute to the thesis. Rather, the significant publications contributed to a unique and personalised theoretical framework specifically designed for this case study, bounded in time and place.

The project’s beginning theoretical framework asserts, with the support of existing literature, that trust is contextual. As a result of that proposition, trust depends on the environment in which the participants find themselves and, depending on the expectations of the social and professional environment, the outcomes or products of trust vary. Given that schools are complex social institutions (see 1.2 Significance), and are characterised by the multifaceted interplay between historic legacies, bureaucratic routines, socio-cultural norms, relationship dynamics, adult and child pedagogy, and multi-stakeholders, to name a few. All of these, and more, play into the realities of the taken for granted celebrations and tensions of everyday life in a school. As Alexander (2005) argues, “any ethnographic account of the discursively constructed historical social order is merely an interpretive snapshot of a very dynamic process” (p. 229). However, in relation to the literature review,
a wider socio-political view of influencing factors in which the project is located, are examined in order to deepen understanding of the project.

The trust theoretical framework is interconnected. However, it is argued in separate categories and summarised in the chapter summary (see section, 2.5). Firstly, in recognising the context rationale for this project, literature concerning the impact leadership has on contemporary school improvement is examined. Secondly, an examination of significant and relevant studies on trust in schools further informs the theoretical framework. Finally, a review of multidisciplinary definitions of trust and how trust is socially built and maintained, as well as concerns about declining social trust and a corresponding increase in perceptions of distrust in society are argued.

\section*{2.2 School improvement}

A wide range of literature incorporates school leadership, and its impact on school improvement. These topics are very dense so limitations are applied to focus primarily on the Australian context (in section, 2.2). However, there are references to international studies as these provide points of comparison. Specifically, international student assessment data from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and education system assessment by country data are used to some degree to situate Australia within the international context. Findings are drawn from Douglas and Harris's (2008) seven school case studies. These schools are all located in Victoria and have distinctly more financial flexibility and autonomy than do other Australian jurisdictions—one of the elements identified in successful school improvement single case studies. New Zealand provides a synthesis of research specifically identifying leadership behaviours with improving student outcomes and trust, so this is included in section, 2.3.3. In keeping with this project’s
inquiry into trust at the Vivaldi School, the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988’s longitudinal study also provides insights into trust and leadership for this review of literature. The extensive body of literature on school improvement is evaluated and summarised below in relation to trust in schools (see section, 2.3.2). The third and final study, describing significant research on trust in education is section 2.3.1 which summarises a study in North America that applied survey data collection yet findings are similar to more qualitative studies such as Bryk and Schneider (2002).

Five perspectives relating to trust and school improvement have emerged from the literature synthesis and are presented under subheadings below. Firstly, contemporary Australian school improvement was partially driven by parent dissatisfaction with public schools and the Australian Government seeking to redress these community perceptions. Secondly, scholars identified the breakdown of community social capital and correspondingly see parents’ withdrawal of support from their child’s school (Bryk & Schneider 2002). Thirdly, from an economic capital point of view, school improvement has also been driven by the recognition of a direct link between education and the level of national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (DEEWR & Gonski 2011; Hanushek 2005). Fourthly, school improvement is investigated from the evidence which supports the roles of school leaders, particularly the Principal, in improving school outcomes, as well as trust in some reports. Fifthly, trust improves student achievement outcomes. The logic presented throughout this review is based on the evidence that derives from the significant correlation between education and GDP. Given this, the logic argued is that Principals and School leaders influence the level of education in their school, and hence influence the GDP. Then trust influences educational outcomes so logically, trust is associated, indirectly, with influencing the GDP.
2.2.1 Parent dissatisfaction with public schools

Donnelly (2004) presents a pessimistic outlook for Australian education. He says that “A strong and vibrant education system is not only important because of its economic consequences; equally important is the way education provides a moral framework and a cultural context in which young Australians both define themselves and address the question: what constitutes the good life?” (p. 6). Significantly, Donnelly demonstrates that in Victoria, in 1980, 22 per cent of students attended non-government schools, increasing to 40 per cent in 12 years (p. 12). Similar figures elsewhere demonstrate the Australian community’s lack of confidence and mistrust towards the providers of education, namely state and national departments. Further, Zuboff and Maxmin report that home schooling numbers also increased (2004). They report that “private schools promise lower pupil-to-teacher ratios, smaller class size, more access to teachers, more flexibility, and greater opportunity to exercise voice over a child’s educational experience” (p. 152).

Caldwell and Harris (2008) cite OECD international comparison PISA studies, conducted by the OECD in 2003 to 2006, and note that the “school autonomy index in budgeting is by far the most powerful, associated with a new increase in scores” (p. 26). They say that these results represent 90 per cent of the world’s economy and show that systems that allow schools the autonomy to budget achieve the highest scores. Findings show Finland as the top ranking nation and Mexico the lowest. Extrapolating from these results, this may indicate that Australian private schools, which have significantly increased autonomy and financial budget compared to public schools, would achieve higher scores. This is evidenced by Ho (2011), demonstrating that public schools with high numbers of multilingual students perform at a much lower level than do private schools. As discussed in section, 1.2.3 Cost of decline in trust of the public school system, movement or “drift” to private schools was partly due to the superior facilities offered, compared to public schools.
(Caldwell 2006, p 78). Caldwell (2006, p. 29) cites an Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) 2004 study which found that approximately one-third of parents whose children attend public schools would prefer to enrol them in private schools. According to Caldwell (2006), who cites The Age and Sydney Morning Herald (10 August 2004), approximately one-third of Australian students already attended private schools, with the proportion at secondary level in one state exceeding 40 per cent and rising (p. 29). Caldwell and Harris (2008, p. 33) confirm the shift away from the public schools to the private schools which potentially creates a two class system: private schools for the privileged and public schools for the disadvantaged.

In response to increasing expectations from parents and to OECD recommendations (2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008), Caldwell and Harris (2008, p. 168) synthesise OECD data and posit innovative changes to the Australian public school sector. They further identify effective school governance, regardless of private or public domain, as a proven, highly significant factor of success and hence a process for all schools to emulate. The governance structures in which highly successful schools (Caldwell & Harris 2008) are effective in terms of management of school governances but, of significant interest, are highly supportive of the approaches taken to support student learning. Of significant interest, in regard to highly successful schools that are effective in terms of management of school governance, are their highly supportive approaches taken to support student learning. These high performing schools ensure that leadership and management are clearly seen as separate. Such schools have local administrative groups that meet weekly and concern themselves with the day to day running of the school, while leadership teams meet regularly to develop, implement, and review internal policies. Both groups working together to achieve the same aim: improving student outcomes. Giving weight to the decentralised Chicago School Reform Act (1988), as presented in Bryk and Schneider (2002)—data collected by
SCHOOL TRUST: SITUATED TO MAXIMISE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR)—and the Australian devolution practices (Caldwell), it is suggested that the autonomy of Private School boards and Public School Councils affords avenues to maximise the student achievement index. Douglas and Harris (2008, p. 49) report on seven case studies of successful Australian schools—all exercising high levels of autonomy alongside improved student achievement results. However, a cautionary note is made as Bryk et al. (2010) state that a recent longitudinal review of the CCSR reveals that “it is now clear that many of these (truly disadvantaged) schools failed to improve under decentralization” (p. 24). They identified cases of schools that performed increasingly well over time, yet were in the same Socioeconomic Status (SES) group as less successful schools. This indicates that there are other complex factors involved such as relational trust (see 2.6.1). Thus, this finding suggests that adequate human capital and relational trust is required in the community in order to contribute to the management or board of the school. This finding is relevant for Australia’s highly disadvantaged communities, such as remote Indigenous schools which may have limitations on the available skills required to manage a School Council.

The OECD Schools for Tomorrow (2003) recognised changes in the relationships schools and parents had once experienced, saying, that “disconnect and fragmentation of school from their local community” was evident (p. 24). To counter this, the report called for networks and partnerships, professional learning, and a local school governance review that enhances greater school community involvement in decision-making that enhances empowerment. The school is envisioned in this report as one which is located within the immediate community as well as the broader community where reciprocal rights and obligations are held (p. 68). Previous to this report, evidence presented by Bryk and Schneider (2002) in relation to the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act reports that decentralisation of school services was created to allow “more direct involvement of local
school professionals with parents and community members in the improvement of neighbourhood schools” (p. 9). More extensively than the Australian reform, parent governing boards in Chicago made decisions about “hiring and firing” that supported school improvement (p. 9). However, this is likely to change in Australia as Masters et al. (2008) recommend that Australian schools commence increased autonomous financial practices in a further effort to advance academic results.

2.2.2 Breakdown in community social capital

Scholars (Christie & Lingard 2001; Lingard, Mills & Hayes 2000) canvas for strategic systemic support to advance student learning needs for the increasingly complex world. They concur that school improvement, or change through creating supportive learning communities, is more effective than changing system structures, such as moving from comprehensive schools to middle schools. Caldwell (2006) cites the Queensland Consortium for Professional Development in Education (2004) report which “drew attention to a range of issues for leaders of professional associations and networks and highlighted the guiding principles of communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002)” . Fullan (2006) cites Hargreaves (2003), saying that “Collaborative committees...transforms knowledge, shares inquiry, engages in continuous learning, and builds communities of practice” (p. 9). A meta-analysis done by Harpaz (2005) positions him to argue that modern learning methods do not align with 10 fundamental principles of effective learning that lead to understanding, and that education today is little more than a factory. Harpaz proposes that a focus in a “community of thinkers” is required to motivate and engage 21st Century students.

Despite Australian academics calling for school improvement more than a decade ago, the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) suggested that a new economic
importance and a changing workplace landscape requires new types of learning in schools and in society. Significant changes to education are required to preserve “social cohesion and democracy” (Kalantzis et al. 2001, p. 1). Society is constantly evolving and it is recognised by the ACDE that an education system is central to preparing Australian citizens to meet new challenges and contribute to society both economically and socially. They argue that “consistent overseas and longitudinal studies stress the economic benefits of investment in education to individuals and nations, yet our governments are increasingly abdicating financial responsibility for its provision” (p. 1). *New Learning: A Charter for Australian Education* report that the ACDE belief that envisioned:

> the new economy requires new persons: persons who can work flexibly with changing technologies; persons who can work effectively in the new relationship-focused commercial environment; and people who are able to work within an open organisational culture and across diverse cultural settings (Kalantzis et al. 2001, p. 33).

In a quest to redress the loss of community, scholars argued for workplace practices that fostered a “shared community”. Senge et al. (2000; 1994) considers that the core of learning organisation work is based upon five disciplines (personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking), culminating in? lifelong programs for study and practice. He explores key areas of building learning communities, including reinventing relationships, being loyal to the truth, strategies for developing personal mastery, building a shared vision, designing a dialogues session, strategies for team learning, organisations as communities and designing an organisation’s governing principles?. Other scholars supported Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice philosophy. For this project, both approaches are adopted and also include a general notion of a collaborative school environment. It is recognised that there are schools as learning
organisations which emphasise several characteristics including trusting relationships; development and improvement; shared values and vision; supportive and shared leadership; valuing learning both individually and collectively; and collaboration and improved learning outcomes. It is argued that the same characteristics are important for the system, such as the Education Department, to uphold and thus use as a support mechanism for educational leaders. Wenger et al. (2002) hold a strong learning focus for communities of practice, stating that “membership is self-selecting with the main aims being to build and maintain knowledge for the organisation (p. 36). In parallel with communities of practice, learning organisations can be made with the focus on niche support benefits for the organisation—developing shared understanding and norms. Hence, the notion of a learning community is one in which educators engage in reflective dialogue, privatisation of practice, collaboration and shared norms and values, aiming to improve the effectiveness of professionals so that students benefit and social connections are made all with the support of trust. Thus nurturing school participants and utilising trust as it acts as a “lubricant, trust greases the machinery of an organisation” (Tschannen-Moran 2004, p. 16).

Dewey recognised that the early schools failed to embrace a wider social concept of learning. He recognised the social and collaborative nature of learning. As a result, his work on schools included provision for students to be seen in a more holistic manner, as members of a learning community. Dewey’s vision contributed to the concept of the modern day school community. Osterman (2000, p. 324) asserts Dewey’s commitment to collaborative learning and the inclusion of parents, saying that “It is the teacher and the school’s responsibility to encourage the development of this sense of community by designing communal activities to which all contribute”. A trend of isolation, or movement away from Dewey’s vision, in which parents spend little time in schools supporting learning
School Trust: Situated to maximise school improvement

is noted by the OECD (2003, p. 54). Thus, through the recognition that social capital is important, there is no guarantee that school staff are equipped to build social capital, despite their every intent. The OECD report *Country Background Report for Australia* (2010) recognises the value of “distributing leadership beyond those at the top of the organisation...ultimately (this) depends on building social trust among individuals (and) on the nature of the interactions that make up day-to-day practice” (2010, pp. 289–90).

Douglas and Harris (2008, p. 48) in their school case studies synthesis find that in successful schools, “the education of the child is seen as a partnership between the school, its teachers and the parents, with the local community networks functioning like an extended family”. For these partnerships to flourish, appropriate leadership development is required to ensure that these day to day interactions build trust as trust enhances learning outcomes (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Robinson 2007) and, trust is synthesised within social capital. Bryk et al. (2010, p. 57) report on far-reaching research which reflects directly on the effects students’ motivation and school involvement, and is summarised in three points as:

1. school efforts to reach out to parents, to engage them directly in the processes for strengthening student learning.
2. teacher efforts to become knowledgeable about student culture and the local community and to draw in this awareness in their lessons.
3. strengthening the network among community organizations, to expand services for students and their families (Bryk et al. 2010, p. 57).

According to Robinson and Timperley (2007) school cultures that have a culture of teacher autonomy of professional practice are “more likely to focus on the possible negative impact of greater accountability rather than on the benefits of opening up their practice to colleagues” (p. 253). On the other hand, schools that encouraged a deprivatised teachers’ practice were more open to discuss their practice and participate in classroom observations
which provided opportunities for further learning. Conversations that reflected an expectation of collective responsibility and leadership facilitation in which professional learning and other activities were organised encouraged teachers to work together. It was found that teachers supported each other to solve teaching problems. Robinson and Timperley (2007, p. 253) cite Kruse, Louis and Bryk (1994), who recognise the challenges leaders face in developing collective responsibility, that may create “tension with traditional norms of professional autonomy”. Paradoxically, deprivatised collective responsibility results in an increase in collegial accountability; mutually felt obligations to share standards of instruction and learning being enacted.

In summary, collective supportive learning communities, in which parents are afforded access and opportunities, are necessary to build school social capital and communalities of practice that enhance learning. Trust is seen as an essential binding and enabling agent for these vital processes. So while there is a “loss of community” in the new and rapidly growing global community, some local school communities are seeking ways to compensate for the loss of the “neighbourhood community”. Successful schools, such as the example provided in Bryk et al.’s (2010) study, create altered ways to redefine schools as supportive learning community centres and comprehensive evidence demonstrating that these processes advance student learning outcomes. Significantly, Bryk and Schneider (2002) find that relational trust is a resource for school improvement: relational trust “fuels these multiple strands in the school change process and thereby contributes to improved student learning. Clearly, relational trust matters as a resource for school improvement” (p. 121).
2.2.3 Education achievement results correspond with GDP

Caldwell (2006, pp. 66–7) reports that the OECD (2004) has provided evidence that a higher priority is being given to education as a factor in ensuring success for the individual and the nation. There is a belief that benefits should extend to all and should be lifelong. In this respect, the report supports the view that the transformation or school improvement agenda is broadly international, and not limited to a relatively small number of countries, as the following excerpts shows:

Changing social and economic conditions have given education an increasing central role in the success of individuals and nations. Human capital has long been identified as a key factor in combating unemployment and low pay, but there is now also robust evidence that it is associated with a wide range of noneconomic benefits, including improvements in health and a greater sense of well-being. The benefits of education have driven increased participation in a widening range of learning activities—by people of all ages, from earliest childhood to advanced adulthood. As the demand for learning grows and becomes more diverse, the challenge for governments is to ensure that the learning opportunities provided respond to real, dynamic needs in a cost-effective manner (OECD 2004, p. 65).

Compelling evidence is provided for economic investment into education, in particular, “The most likely way to improve student performance is to improve the quality of teachers” (Hanushek 2005, p. 14). Timperley et al. (2007, p. xx) cite the International Academy of Education Economic outcomes and school quality: “One standard deviation on test performance (international mathematics and science tests) was related to one percent difference in annual growth rates of per capita GDP”. Despite a strong focus on management of the school, and not necessarily on improving student learning outcomes,
(Caldwell 2006, p. 23) shows that countries that perform better require schools to self-manage, in order to achieve higher results on the PISA. Caldwell (2006, p. 24) cites Woessmann’s (2001) analysis of the TIMSS and “found a powerful connection between decentralisation of decision-making at the school level and student achievement”. Caldwell and Spinks (2008) attribute this to increased autonomy, particularly financial, that enables schools to resource learning programs. Caldwell (2006) cites the possibilities of networking also evident in the work of the Schooling for Tomorrow Project of the OECD that published a book under the title Networks for innovation: Towards new models for managing schools and systems (OECD 2003). The following excerpt illustrates the case for networks: “School autonomy goes hand-in-hand with being connected to community, other educators, and the broader society” (Caldwell 2006, p. 54).

Despite the evidence provided with the country to country variation, based on PISA, in-country variation is extreme. Recently released Review of funding for schooling final report (DEEWR & Gonski, 2011), findings clearly revealed that as a nation, Australia invests far too little in schools, particularly our public schools and the current funding model is not transparent. Australia has a high degree of performance inequality, higher than the OECD average. “Research commissioned by the panel indicates that a focus on shortening Australia’s “underperforming tail” by 10 per cent would bring it halfway to closing the performance gap with Canada” (p. 107). There is a substantial gap between what students achieve in disadvantaged areas compared to those in more affluent areas. Performance in PISA highlights the significant gap between the highest and lowest performing students in Australia, relative to other OECD countries. The DEEWR and Gonski (2011) report confirms that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are disproportionately represented in Australia’s “underperforming tail” (p. 114). The report recommends significant financial support to hold the decline in performance at both ends of achievement and warns that the
recommended changes are vital to improve Australia’s productivity and competitiveness. These inconsistencies of student achievement raise issues of human rights, recognising the imperative fact that all Australians should “be able to develop their capacities and participate fully in society” (p. 107).

2.2.4 Principals’ influence on learning outcomes

The role of School Leadership has changed over time to reflect the contextual expectations of governments and academics. With globalisation, and the strengthening influence of the OECD, changes to the education landscape at all levels are increasingly more systemic and systematic. With a firm connection made between School Leadership and student outcomes by Dinham, Ingvarson & Kleinhenz (2008); Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) and Robinson (2007), international scholars are continuing to redress old beliefs that question the impact of leadership on achievement standards. Timperley (2007) cites early studies (Coleman et al. 1966; Jencks et al. 1972) “in which schools made relatively little difference to student achievement” that presented a grim picture (p. xx). Cuttance (1998) indicated a significant change in educational thinking, combining convincing multileveled studies with findings on school achievement outcomes that demonstrated considerable failing in educational reliability. In short, students within the same school may have up to 66 per cent achievement disparity:

Recent research on the impact of schools on student learning leads to the conclusion that 8–19 per cent of the variation in student learning outcomes lies between schools, with a further amount of up to 55 per cent of the variation in individual learning outcomes between classrooms within schools. In total, approximately 60 per cent of the variation in the performance of students lies either between schools or between classrooms, with the
remaining 40 per cent being due to either variation associated with students themselves or to random influences (Cuttance 1998, pp. 1158–9).

According to Marzano et al. (2005), compelling research now positions the school leaders’ role as having a “moderately strong effect...on student outcomes” (p. 5). The stage is set for Principal leadership practice to implement improved student outcomes. Robinson (2009; 2007) applied meta-analysis methodology to demonstrate any links between leadership and student learning outcomes. Robinson’s research indicates that educational leaders can make a difference to student learning outcomes by implementing the five leadership dimensions and create an expectation within the organisation that these are school priorities. The most significant leadership dimension was Promoting and Participating in Teacher Learning and Development with an effect size of 0.84. Dimension Five, Ensuring an Orderly and Supportive Environment is achieved by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing a safe, orderly and supportive learning environment:

“Average ES = 0.27 (SE =.09) 42 effect sizes from 8 studies” (Robinson 2007, p. 8). Relational trust is a core component of this dimension (Robinson 2007, p.18). Zammit et al. (2007, p. 22) recognise the difficulties of measuring the effect of School Leadership on student outcomes because of the complex nature of School Leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). They cite Leithwood and Riehl’s (2003) synthesis that “showed that Principals have a salient but indirect effect on student outcomes through the goals they establish and the quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning environment they encourage within their schools” (p. 22).

Educational leadership, broadly defined by Caldwell (2006) “to include a nation, state, school system, but especially a school, refers to a capacity to nurture a learning community...Such leadership is concerned with pedagogy and curriculum, but there is a
“hard edge” to the concepts. A “learning community” or a “learning organisation” sounds a very comfortable place in which to work, but the stakes are high if the consensus on expectations for schools is to be realised” (p. 120). From a global perspective, the OECD Report on Improving School Leadership, (2008) recognises the crucial role education and economic development have on the GDP, and expresses concern that in many ways educational leadership is outdated: that the “role of school Principal designed for the industrial age has not changed enough to deal with the complex challenges schools are facing in the 21st century” (p. 16).

Generally, effective School Leadership as defined in the OECD report, Improving School Leadership, (2008), as guiding their activity:

may not reside exclusively in formal positions but instead be distributed across a range of individuals in the school. Principals, managers, academic leaders, departmental chairs and teachers can contribute as leaders to the goal of learning centred schooling. Precise distribution of these leadership contributions can vary and can depend on factors such as governance and management structure, levels of autonomy and accountability, school size and complexity, and levels of student performance. Principals can act as leaders of schools as learning organisations which in addition, can benefit and contribute to positive learning environments and communities (OECD 2008, p. 17).

This definition recognises and highlights leadership as distributed, and inclusive of many levels of schools. It acknowledges that learning is central and responsibilities and decisions are contextual in terms of position in the organisation and needs of the school. Harris (2004), an advocate of distributive leadership, acknowledges the complexities in defining School Leadership but recognises that “adoption and adaptation within schools” is not
widespread (p. 19). Dempster et al. (2011) summarised key international drivers of School Leadership. They show that many countries moved to decentralise in the 1990s to increase school autonomy with the associated increase in parental and community choice and control (p. 9). They say that this resulted in professional learning of Principals that focused on finance and resource management. However, more recently, according to Dempster et al. (2011), there:

- is consensus in the literature that better student outcomes should be central to educational leadership. Transformational leadership orientates the leader towards people as opposed to tasks. Through employment of interpersonal skills, the transformational leader can build close bonds with staff, assist followers to develop and achieve goals, engage teacher commitment for school vision, and develop a productive school climate (p. 11).

Pedagogical leadership is required to ensure that the school leaders are available on a daily basis for strategic pedagogical planning and mentoring for teachers. Many recent studies point directly to the role of ongoing teacher professional learning, in context, to effect positive change in learning outcomes. This more recent move towards pedagogical leadership is a far cry from the charismatic leader of the 1990s. Such is the change that it is worth being mindful that some educational leaders may feel threatened by the expectation from the system that their role should be reshaped. If this is the case, support is required through mentoring and the Education Department to up-skill in pedagogical leadership. Masters et al. (2008) believe that highly effective school leaders set directions for a school (accounting for the greatest proportion of a leader’s impact), including establishing a shared vision, motivating the school community to pursue that vision, monitoring the school’s performance, and promoting effective communication. Effective leaders also are
School Trust: Situated to Maximize School Improvement

strongly focused on developing and mentoring staff and redesigning school structures and practices to maximise student, staff and school performance (p. 22).

2.2.5 Trust improves student achievement outcomes

Please stop here: Since Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) significant study on “Trust in Schools” (See section 2.3.2 Bryk and Schneider) and Tschanen-Moran’s findings (2004) (see section 2.3.1), other studies have followed. Zammit (2007, p. 11) cites research literature that places school relationships at the centre of quality teaching: “These places and relationships were supportive, inclusive, “owned” by teachers and students, and effective for different types of students (Alton-Lee, 2003; OECD, 2005)”. Zammit et al. (2007) cite a number of studies that recognise the importance of School Leadership and trust and these are worth mentioning. However, the caveat applied here is that the word “trust” is used, though the actual definition or understanding of trust in the different contexts is unknown.

At the same time, it is evident that the numbers of publications on trust in schools is growing. These eight themes are cited by Zammit et al. (2007):

(1) “Trust is a quality that demonstrates confidence in the behaviour of another person, group or institution. It is the social glue that binds individuals and groups together for the purposes of action (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002)” (cited in Zammit et al. 2007, p. 32).

(2) “Both York-Barr and Duke (2004) and Harris and Muijs (nd) identified several barriers to and consequences of teacher leadership. These included: lack of trust amongst staff” (cited in Zammit et al. 2007, p. 29).

(3) “Harris and Chapman (2002) identified that trust in the school leader by the school community was as important as the trust shown by the teachers” (cited in Zammit et al. 2007, p. 32).
(4) “Several researchers identified quality leaders as having a trusting disposition (Duignan, 2003) plus the capability of modelling and developing trust within the school community (Harris & Chapman, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2005; Taylor-Moore, 2004)” (cited in Zammit et al. 2007, p. 32).

(5) “Day’s (2004) study found that the creation of a climate in which the head ‘trusts you implicitly and will let you deal with things’ was a key quality of leadership valued by teachers. Being trusted enhanced teachers’ motivation and helped to build and sustain participative school community relationships” (cited in Zammit et al. 2007, p. 32).

(6) “Mulford and Silins (2003) found that developing a trusting, collaborative climate was the initial step in developing collective teacher efficacy and embarking on school improvement.” (cited in Zammit et al. 2007, p. 32).

(7) “Sergiovanni (2005) found that relational trust was the catalyst for developing a supportive work culture, positive orientations towards change, and improvements in student learning outcomes...found that quality school leaders displayed personal integrity and trust and provided the conditions in which teachers can try something new” (cited in Zammit et al. 2007, p. 32).


The eight themes firmly recognise the essential role that trust has in building relationships with staff and the school community, supporting staff during professional risk taking, and
developing teacher efficacy. While not all directly correlate with improving student outcomes, it is argued here that supportive and trusting school conditions, as described, are a prerequisite for improving student achievement. Building on these themes, crucial to trust are notions of competence. Hoy and Tschannen-Morgan (1999) identified five trust themes: willingness to risk, benevolence, reliability, competence, and honesty. Specifically, relating to competence Boreham (2011) investigates attributes of both individual and collective competency. Individual competence refers to one’s “ability, knowledge or skill to do something successfully” which is socially constructed and context-dependent. He cites the triadic theory of collective competence which states that groups who enact collective competence must “make collective sense of events in the workplace; develop and access a collective knowledge base; maintain a sense if interdependence [and] prevent fragmentation” (p. 80). In order to employ collective knowledge, groups draw on shared language and concepts “maintained over time” (p. 85). Given that competence is an element of trust, then it is suggested here that collective language and concepts of trust contribute to collective school trust, which is socially constructed and context dependent.

### 2.3 Significant research on trust in education

A number of key international studies conducted inform this study on the effect of trust on schools and student learning outcomes. The relevance of these studies, in relation to trust in schools, is presented in a historical context because they theoretically build on each other. It is also noted, despite these significant findings, that the strategic implementation of trust in Australian schools is yet to be significantly recognised by Australian education authorities. It is worth noting that no Australian trust studies were located. Firstly, there are two significant North American studies, the first one listed was developed and conducted by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1999, 1998, 2000) and Tschannen-Moran (2004). The application of the analysis tool, *Five facets of trust*, was further applied and trust concepts
in school contexts are extended by Hoy et al. (2007) and Forsyth, Adams, and Hoy (2011). Secondly, Bryk and Schneider (2002, 2003) contributed to the literature by identifying through grounded theory the concept of “Relational trust”. Longitudinal analysis of their Chicago research was extended by Bryk et al. (2010). A third study, an international meta-analysis study was conducted in New Zealand that synthesises international research on the effect of school leaders on improving student learning outcomes (Robinson 2007; Robinson & Lai 2006; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe 2008; Robinson & Timperley 2007). In this study, the important role of trust was confirmed. These three studies are investigated below and inform the project’s trust theoretical framework.

2.3.1 Hoy and Tschannen-Moran

Hoy and Tschannen-Morgan (1999) developed three trust scales designed to measure trust in Principals, colleagues, and clients (1999). Five facets of trust were developed through an analysis of 150 articles on trust, where convergence identified five themes: willingness to risk, benevolence, reliability, competence, and honesty. A questionnaire instrument with 48 items was developed for schools measuring the Five facets of trust against a multidisciplinary—integrating psychological and sociological properties—definition of trust. Trust Scales were tested in a pilot study to ascertain their reliability. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran’s conception of trust is:

an individual’s or group’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran 1999, p.189).

Adams et al. (2009) point out that, in Hoy and Tschannen-Moran’s (1999) multidisciplinary definition of trust, “perceived vulnerability and risk are central to trust, and without these
cognitive conditions, there is no need to trust” (p. 8). Saying that “trusting beliefs emerge from discernments of another’s intentions that are based on the criteria for trustworthy behaviour” (p. 8). Despite “some agreement on the constitutive properties of trust”, trust differs in different workplaces (p. 8). From this, the influence of the context in which to trust or not to trust appears to be a factor. Trust has been difficult to study, not only because it is a multidimensional construct but because it is a dynamic one as well. The nature of vulnerability can change over the course of a relationship as the level of interdependence increases or decreases. Trust depends on what one expects of another on the basis of norms of behaviour or role expectations. In addition, most relationships of trust are embedded in social contexts that impose or contain social constraints and consequently are dynamic and context specific. A study conducted by Adams et al. (2009) applied Hoy and Tschannen-Moran’s (1999) multidisciplinary definition of trust and developed a modified version of the parent–school trust questionnaire instrument. They found that school trust was a “collective property of school role groups that forms through affective, cognitive, and behavioural norms” (p. 4). Despite variations, such as Socioeconomic Status (SES), cultural diversity and school size, “school leaders can build and sustain parent trust by aligning policies and practices to address the affective needs of parents” (p. 4). Adams et al. found that parent involvement in the school, such as volunteering and school decision-making helped develop “synchrony with teachers, administrators, and other parents to shape and reinforce an educational vision that fosters student learning and growth” (p. 17). Significantly they found that parent–school relationship reduced parents’ vulnerabilities and this promoted trust. They found that:

- mechanisms are cognitive and affective (emotional) norms that emerge from the collective behaviour of role groups. When the collective behaviour of teachers and school authorities exude the discernment criteria of trust,
parents are more likely to perceive schools as trustworthy (Adams et al. 2009, p. 27).

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) report that relationships and social networks “can exert both formal and informal control that encourages people to act in a trustworthy manner...Trust is pivotal in efforts to improve education” (p. 550). They identify the tension with increased accountability and rising expectation, citing the media’s negative influence on school performance—resulting in distrust. They posit that the costs of distrust are high, which results in compromised productivity and “self-protective actions that provoke feelings of anxiety and insecurity, [and these] can be self-perpetuating” (p. 550). This distrust scenario draws productive energy away from school improvement and student learning.

Tschannen-Moran’s (2004) found that, when teachers make trust discernments based on their own willingness to be vulnerable to another role group, they interpret the other parties’ actions; trust takes different forms at different stages of a relationship. It is clear then that trust relationships in the school context display multidimensional and dynamic characteristics that form the basis of trusting relationships (Tschannen-Moran 2004). Students’ perceptions of teacher–student relationships, and in turn students’ engagement with the learning processes, are themselves influenced by the level of trust students experience from their teachers. Trust is related to a positive school climate, to productive communication, to participative decision processes, and to organisational participants’ willingness to go beyond the minimum requirements of their job descriptions. Tschannen-Moran (2004) states, “trust makes a difference in student achievement, teachers’ collective sense of efficacy, and overall school effectiveness. If schools are to function well, then they need trust” (p. 584).
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Results drawing on over 300 elementary and secondary schools and three case studies of three Principals reported in Trust Matters, (Tschannen-Moran 2004, p. xii) provided a platform to consider when designing this research and to reflect on the following data analysis. The case studies provide valuable narrative with which to compare this project’s findings, in particular the leadership characteristics that supported and enhanced trust. By applying the Five facets of trust definition, the narratives describe the degree to which these three Principals create trust. Two of the three Principals were less effective in building trust which resulted in their being less effective in running the school: one was an “overzealous reformer” and the other one “lost the faith of his faculty by avoiding conflict” (p. xiii). The most successful Principal, as determined by the data, was Brenda Thompson (pseudonym), portrayed as a caring and effective Principal who “successfully balanced a concern for task with concern for relationships within her schools” (p. xiii). Further to this, Brenda Thompson’s students performed better in academic student achievement assessments, despite the fact that the students were of low Socioeconomic Status (SES).

The Australian Government is strategically investing significant funds into programs to support disadvantaged Australian families. The Australian Social Inclusion Board, Breaking Cycles of Disadvantage (2011) is committed to breaking the inter-generational cycle of disadvantage through inclusion policies. Education is central to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. The Australian Social Inclusion Board says that:

- early school leaving was a prominent characteristic of those with disadvantage. Educational achievements of disadvantaged children are lower than those from less-disadvantaged backgrounds. Extra assistance should be given to children with lower levels of achievement at an early stage in order to prevent early school leaving. Study highlighted the significant role
of education in breaking cycles of disadvantage, but also the ways in which primary and secondary schools did not always meet the needs of participants because of: an inadequate approach to addressing problem behaviours; willingness on the part of schools to suspend and expel students exhibiting problem behaviours, rather than addressing underlying causes; a lack of options for those who were not academically inclined; inadequate support for students with learning or mental disabilities; and a lack of careers planning and guidance (Australia Dept. of the Prime Minister and Cabinet & Australian Social Inclusion Board 2011, p. <www.socialinclusion.gov.au>).

Additional assistance, not restricted to financial capital but including social capital, to support socially disadvantaged students will also assist in addressing the unacceptably long tail in educational achievement highlighted by Gonski (2011). Building trusting relationships between school staff and socially disadvantaged students and their families are supported according to Tschannen-Moran (2004). They found that “students with high concentrations of poor students are likely to benefit from a focus on the development of trust” (p. 139). Despite the extensive research identifying disparities between educational opportunities and corresponding earning power of low SES students, little is likely to change as educational policy and funding reflect structural conditions and not cultural revitalisation (Adams et al. 2011). Moving away from a “control over teachers to support for conditions that enable human and social capacity to flourish” is arguably a significant change in educational thinking (Adams et al. 2011, p. 152). Instead of imposing a macro “top-down” structural approach, they assert that internal collective trust in which “dynamic relationships among schoolmembers” create the desired school improvement (p. 153).
2.3.2 Bryk and Schneider

The report *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform* (1983, p. 13) suggests that the American educational standard was in decline—US math and science students scored well below students to other countries. Section 1: “Indicators of the Risk” (1983) cited testimony received by the Commission—“The College Board’s Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT) demonstrate a virtually unbroken decline from 1963 to 1980. Average verbal scores fell over 50 points and average mathematics scores dropped nearly 40 points”. By 1980 the achievement gap between African American/Hispanic and white students was widening. This concern provoked educational researchers to discover ways to raise the overall standard and reduce the racial achievement gap. From this concern, the 1990 School Restructuring Study investigated 24 schools in 16 American States between 1991–1994 and rendered findings that high quality student learning did not go hand in hand with school restructuring. Newmann et al. (1996) reports that “a sustained, school wide concentration on the intellectual quality of student learning and a school wide professional community among the staff were the keys to successful restructuring” (p. xiv).

Newmann and Wehlage (1995) report a synthesis of four significant studies on school improvement:

- School Restructuring Study (SRS)—24 schools over 16 States studied between 1991–1994
- The National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) of 800 high school grade 8 students between 1998–1992
- The Chicago School Reform (CSR)—more than 400 schools from 1990–1994
The findings of the synthesised studies concluded that “there is no ‘magic bullet’ or simple recipe for successful school restructuring. For a restructuring effort to work, it must be clearly focused on four key factors: Student Learning, Authentic Pedagogy, School Organisational Capacity and External Support” (Newmann & Wehlage 1995, p. 2). To achieve this, Newmann et al. find that schools “need to have a clear purpose for student learning, collaborative activity to achieve purpose [delivered through a] professional community” (p. 51). The synthesis found that six key structural conditions enhance the professional community: shared governance, interdependent working teams, staff development, deregulation to support school autonomy, small schools to maximise communication and trust, and broad range of parent involvement (p. 52).

Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) longitudinal research of 10 years on elementary education in Chicago Public Schools was noteworthy due to the structure, size and research findings. Both qualitative and quantitative data collected from students, parents, teachers, Principals and community leaders ascertain “an empirical grounded account of relational trust as a social resource for school improvement” (p. xiv). Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) early data analysis indicated that “relationships” were an important factor in school reform and this led the research team to focus on “respect, trust, caring, and personal regard and caring were quite significant to local actors as they made sense of the reform efforts” (p. 35).

While trust was not the original inquiry, Forsyth et al. (2011) say: “This work serendipitously pointed to trust as a critical social phenomenon” (p. 71). Newmann et al. (1996) also noted the importance of trust in establishing a school professional learning community. They found that when teachers work in a workplace with an ethos of open, caring, sharing and trusting professional relationships then they are prepared to share their beliefs and differences about teaching practice and this in turn enhances further teacher learning.
Deprivitization of practice further adds to the open sharing norm and teachers’ are then more easily able to learn from other teachers in a supportive school culture.

The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 was a significant and far reaching approach to improving student outcomes through decentralisation and parent empowerment—a leverage for school reform—applying Putnam’s argument that the “level of social trust within a school community should influence the effectiveness of Chicago’s decentralisation reform” (Bryk & Schneider 2002, p. 13). Decentralisation of school governance meant that parents had “stronger social ties” with school staff and Principals had more say in the hiring and firing of staff (p. 9). High levels of social trust supported school business exchanges, with parents less likely to “rely on direct monitoring and extensive legal mechanisms to regulate economic transactions”—hence, schools’ effectiveness is influenced by the “quality of social ties across the school community” (p. 13). School improvement in this study demonstrates the effectiveness of school relationships without external macro policy employing control “over teachers”.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that despite the increased autonomy, emerging findings indicated that local factors were involved (p. 13). The cohort of Chicago Public Schools were “truly disadvantaged communities” such that where social capital is low, essential support must be very high (Bryk & Schneider 2002, p. 178). These schools are highly stressed, and also exist in weak communities and face “extraordinary human needs and modest base capacities to sustain meaningful improvement...[with an] extraordinary concentration of student needs, who were homeless, in foster care, or living in contexts of neglect” (Bryk et al. 2010, p. 24). Given the challenging social landscape facing many Chicago families and schools, as described in Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) research, the level of distrust between school and home was high, incorporating blame, and lack of empathy toward the families
Race and class difference added to the complexity of daily school interactions—miscommunication reinforced the social mismatch and existing prejudices and distrust. This data suggested that social capital was a factor for school improvement. Drawing on the work of Fukuyama, Bryk and Schneider recognised the potential of school institutions to contribute to community social capital, as well as develop and use social capital to support school improvement (see sections, 2.4.1 Social capital and 2.4.2 Definitions of social trust). Grounded Theory analysis of social capital in relation to schools identified the emergence and confirmation of relational trust—“qualities of interpersonal social exchanges in school communities, and how these cumulate in an organisational property” (Bryk & Schneider 2002, p. 12).

Relational trust is specific to schools and has a distinct role because “relationships characterise the social exchanges of schooling: teachers with students, teachers with other teachers, teachers and parents, and all groups with the school Principal” (Bryk & Schneider 2003, p. 41). Relational trust is experienced when role obligation is firmly met as well as held in expectations about the obligations of others within the school community—including parents. When aspects are functioning well—rights and obligations are met—“mutual dependencies are embedded within the social exchanges in any school community” and relational trust is shared (p. 41). Relational trust is forged in daily social exchanges. Through their actions, school participants articulate their sense of obligations toward others, and others in turn come to discern the intentionality enacted here. Trust grows over time through exchanges where the expectations held for others are validated in action. Even successful simple interactions with others can enhance collective capacities for more complex subsequent actions; in this regard, increasing trust and deepening organisational change are reciprocal (Bryk & Schneider 2002, pp. 136–7).
Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that social respect and personal regard were key aspects individuals used to discern trust: ongoing self-reflection or discernment regarding the school based interactions, and assessing the degree to which moral obligations are being met. These factors are described by Bryk and Schneider (2002) as key aspects of relational trust. Role competence and personal integrity are expected by the community, staff and school Principal and these act as discerning criteria. Killinger (2010, p. 29) describes key character traits for integrity, injecting “honesty, sympathy, empathy, compassion, fairness, self-control, and duty into our character so that we will uphold high personal and professional standards in all circumstances”. For this role trust to occur, there needs to be a clear delineation of role expectations and obligations by which individual and group behaviour can be appraised (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Given the social dynamic of trust and the context specific nature of social norms, it then seems logical to include teacher role obligation in the discussion about trust development, at the school level, between teacher and parent. If the teacher fulfills parent expectations, then trust is built. Adams et al. (2009) recognise the role of professional responsibilities and believe that “trust functions as a type of social control that mitigates reliance on formalised rules and centralised structures to guide behavior” (p. 6). They suggest that:

   Trusting organisations depend more on personal autonomy and professional choice than standardized processes. Individuals are trusted to perform their tasks according to the normative standards that pervade an organisation’s culture” (Adams et al. 2009, p. 6).

Relational trust, as determined by Bryk and Schneider (2002), has many benefits: it supports collective decision-making, expedites decision-making including reform initiatives and encourages an openness to receive constructive feedback in order to improve performance. Their analysis of student achievement data against the relational trust data
revealed a correlation: “increases in student learning of 8 per cent in reading and 20 per cent in mathematics in a five-year period” (p. 43). Relational trust is constructed “in day-to-day social exchanges” (p. 43) where actions demonstrate personal regard, respect and role competence; that is, actions validate mutual obligations and expectations. Dynamic social relationships within the school community are demonstrated to be a crucial factor in successful school reform. Given that schools comprise people and that the nature of relational trust is the cornerstone to improved student outcomes, it is necessary to describe the nature of these relationships as discovered. “We have learned, based on our research on school reform in Chicago, that a broad base of trust across a school community lubricates much of a school’s day to day functioning and is a critical resource as local leaders embark on ambitious improvement plans” (p. 5).

Managing staff self-interest, according to Bryk and Schneider (2002), plays an important part in the micro dynamics of trust. Whether the school staff is motivated to improve learning outcomes or seek improved work conditions, these drivers, such as refusing to mark student work after school hours, impact on the decisions that are made throughout the day. In extreme cases, the focus of thought and action is on the “self” and not on the child’s learning and wellbeing. The Principal’s role is essential, according to Bryk and Schneider, as they establish respect and personal regard when they recognise the vulnerabilities of others. Staff who do not align with the emerging new agenda will leave and others who choose not to leave will be encouraged to leave. Bryk et al. (2010) state that the school Principal “must also be prepared to use their role authority to reform the school community via professional norms”—enforcing by directing individuals who threaten shared norms. Once the norms are embedded into the school culture, “such authority may rarely need to be invoked” (p. 208).
Longitudinal analysis of the original Chicago school data (Bryk & Schneider 2002) reveals lasting results in which early findings are confirmed and arguably strengthened as presented by Bryk et al.’s (2010) later analysis. On relational trust, they report that “powerful relationships found in our data are associated with the effects of relational trust and how it operates as both a lubricant for organisational change and a moral resource for sustaining the hard work of local school improvement” (p. 207). High levels of relational trust resulted in ongoing improvement in teacher’s innovation, commitment, parent involvement and safety and order. Low trust scores showed weaker growth across all organisational subsystems and correspondingly weaker school improvement. Kochanek (2005) found that initial stages of relational trust development cultivate low risk exchanges and create small success with the staff and community shared commitments, thus building social capacity to face greater challenges as the change agenda mobilises. It is suggested by Bryk et al. (2010) that role authority is required to establish conditions for trust and thus for school improvement. Successful reform requires “an environment of high relational trust rooted in professional colleagueship, expert practice, and mutual commitment—attaining these may require significant use of role authority” (p. 208). School improvement requires change that sometimes moves people out of their “comfort zone” and this causes reactionary behaviours if not managed well.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) argue that professional practice must change to support the level of improvement in student learning required to reduce the poverty cycle. Central to these changes is the role of the Principal: when they develop and sustain relational trust then school improvement is more likely. It is necessary to establish:

- both respect and personal regard...acknowledge the vulnerabilities of others,
- actively listen to their concerns, and eschew arbitrary actions...couple this with a compelling school vision, and their behaviour can be understood as
advancing the vision, their integrity is also affirmed. Then assuming Principals are competent in the management of routine school affairs, an overall ethos conducive to trust formation is likely to emerge (Bryk & Schneider 2002, p. 137).

Observation over time, reported in Bryk et al. (2010), identifies that “strong School Leadership is anchored in the effective management of every day [school] operations” (p. 208). They acknowledge that this is often “taken for granted”. However, when effective operational management is not managed, it becomes very obvious. The recognition that schools are often under-resourced, and that the leadership style encouraged by bureaucracies and educational authors is instructional or pedagogical leadership that expects Principals to “spend at least half of their time within classrooms, while simultaneously enhancing their school’s ability to manage its day-to-day affairs, is an educational pipe dream” (p. 209).

In sum, our research suggests relational trust as the one mechanism that makes governance reforms matter by catalysing a redress of the dysfunctional understandings that may now operate among adults and impede educating all children well. Consequently, we can reasonably expect significant improvements in student learning to result from other governance reform—if the power distribution reshaped by these reforms actually culminates in a renewal of relational trust at the school level. Absent such trust building, broad-based improvements remain unlikely (Bryk et al. 2010, p. 217).
2.3.3 Robinson

Robinson investigated the impact of School Leadership on academic and non-academic student outcomes and why particular methods work. Her study was designed to analyse peer reviewed quantitative and mixed methods research on the topic. Eleven studies were analysed using meta-analysis methodology to generate the results (Bamburg & Andrews 1991, p. 248; Brewer 1993; Eberts & Stone 1986; Freidkin & Slater 1994; Heck 1992; Heck, Larsen & Marcoulides 1990; Heck & Marcoulides 1996; Heck, Marcoulides & Lang 1991; Hoy, Tater & Bliss 1990; Leitner 1994; Robinson & Timperley 2007; Wellisch et al. 1978), according to Robinson and Timperley (2007, p. 248). From the investigation five leadership dimensions were inductively derived. Robinson also analysed the language used in each study as well as creating clearer understandings of educational leadership behaviour.

“Apart from the advantage of a greatly increased number of effect sizes from which to estimate the mean effect for each dimension, this analytic technique enabled a much more precise analysis of the relative impact of various leadership types than is possible if the unit of analysis is each study” (p. 21). Robinson and Timperley (2007) challenged assumptions held in the literature concerning leadership and its impact on student outcomes. They cite scholars such as Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) who demonstrate that “transformational leadership research consistently shows relatively large effects on staff attitudes but negligible or weak indirect effect on students” (p. 289). Correspondingly, they cite Leithwood et al. (2007) and Spillane, Camburn, and Pareja (2007) on distributed leadership analyses and the benefits of extending leadership throughout the school, yet evidence on student learning effects are not substantiated. Hence, the thrust of Robinson’s five leadership dimensions is to describe leadership actions that have demonstrated effects on progressing student learning.
A description of each category and an average effect size and standard error was calculated for all leadership dimensions and these are summarised below (Robinson 2007, p. 8):

1. *Establishing Goals and Expectations:* setting, communicating and monitoring of learning goals, standards and expectations with staff  
   Average ES = 0.35 (SE = .08) 49 effect sizes from 7 studies

2. *Strategic Resourcing:* aligning human and physical resources to priority teaching goals. Average ES = 0.34 (SE = .09) 11 effect sizes from 7 studies

3. *Planning, Coordinating and Evaluating Teaching and the Curriculum:* direct involvement in the support and evaluation of teaching as well as summative feedback to teachers. Average ES = 0.42 (SE = .07) 79 effect sizes from 7 studies

4. *Promoting and Participating in Teacher Learning and Development:* formal or informal professional learning. Average ES = 0.84 (SE = .14) 17 effect sizes from 6 studies

5. *Ensuring an Orderly and Supportive Environment:* by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing an orderly and supportive learning environment. Average ES = 0.27 (SE = .09) 42 effect sizes from 8 studies (Robinson 2007, p. 8).

Robinson advises that “an effect size of between 0 and 0.2 was interpreted as showing no or a weak effect; between 0.2 and 0.4 as a small but possibly educationally significant effect; between 0.4 and 0.6 as having a moderate educationally significant impact, and greater than 0.6 as having a large and educationally significant impact” (p. 9). Significantly, dimension five averages ES 0.27 which is interpreted here as “a small but possibly educationally significant effect”. Findings from Robinson’s meta-analysis have generated a
theoretical leadership framework grounded on extensive research. As a consequence, the theoretical underpinnings of all the dimensions are argued by Robinson as crucial leadership actions for contemporary school leaders aiming for improved student outcomes. A more detailed overview of dimension five, *Ensuring an Orderly and Supportive Environment*, is summarised below.

Of the five dimensions, *Dimension Five: Ensuring an Orderly and Supportive Environment* is noteworthy for this project. Essentially, this dimension describes the importance of establishing a safe, caring and orderly school environment that facilitates the learning business of schools. The dimension was derived from eight studies which generated 42 indicators for an average effect size of 0.27. Robinson also drew from the large scale Chicago study of Bryk & Schneider (2002). This dimension is summarised:

The indicators that contributed to this dimension included such things as a focus by leadership on cultural understanding and a respect for difference, leaders’ provision of a safe orderly environment with a clear discipline code, and minimal interruptions to teaching time. It also incorporated the protection of faculty from undue pressure from parents and officials, and effectiveness in resolving conflicts (Robinson 2007, p. 18).

This fifth dimension, *Ensuring an Orderly and Supportive Environment*, draws on the Bryk and Schneider’ (2002) Grounded Theory Relational trust to define and describe this dimension. Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000) are also applied in the fifth dimension in aspects of people’s willingness to feel warm and affectionate under supportive conditions.
2.4 Multidisciplinary trust theories

This section positions the project’s inquiry within the contemporary and pertinent historical literature on trust which contributes to the discussion, findings, and conclusions that follow. Artificially categorised into five subheadings—social capital, definitions of social trust, ethnomethodology, culture and, trust and children—these multidisciplinary trust theories inform the project’s theoretical framework. This is by no means an exhaustive list as many more topics and groups were considered by the author but excluded as they did not significantly add to the study (Hill & O’Hara 2006). Castelfranchi and Falcone (2010) describe the psychological basis of trust. They talk about “attitude and disposition” within the framework of social relationships. It is the trust that is constructed and lost socially that is the prime focus of this section.

A lack of theoretical convergence on trust definitions makes it difficult to reduce the multidisciplinary issues to common themes (Gariulo & Ertug 2006, p. 166). Simply, Gariulo and Ertug (2006) say that, “practically all definitions agree that trust is a belief that reflects an actor’s (the trustor) expectations about another actor (the trustee)” (p. 166). In addition to this plain summary of trust they make two other points which basically say that trust is a willingness of person A to be open to the actions of person B based on the expectation that person B will fulfil the expectation with no harm to person A in a particular situation, irrespective of person A’s ability to control person B’s behaviour. This summary recognises the socio-political contextual situation of the decision to trust or not to trust. Through the analysis of literature a firmer understanding of trust in relation to trust within schools will be defined.
2.4.1 Social capital

Out of a plethora of research definitions and functions of social trust, this appraisal aims to understand trust from a sociological perspective, and consequently, glean a deeper appreciation of how trust is created in society, particularly schools. The interdependent relationships within communities in which individuals work together to achieve common good are known as social capital. It is generally recognised that the relationship between trust and social capital is interconnected (Falk & Kilpatrick 1999); “trust is fundamental in the production of social capital” (Falk & Guenther 1999, p. 3). Here it is recognised that both trust and social capital are interdependent. However, for the purpose of this analysis only, both social capital and sociological trust are described separately to ensure that the issues are examined.

Social capital, despite being a relatively new social concept is now a “taken-for-granted (and therefore often neglected) “third capital” after physical and human” (Falk & Balatti 2004, p. 47). Social capital was originally introduced to the scholarly world by Bourdieu (1983), Coleman (1988) and Putnam et al. (1993). Bourdieu (1986) described social capital as being “made up of social obligations (“connections”), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility” (1986, p. 243). Woolcock (1998) refined the definition of social capital, of “encompass(ing) the norms and networks facilitating collective action for mutual benefit” (p. 155). Woolcock differentiates between “bonding” social capital and “bridging” social capital: essential exclusive and inclusive social practices. Explained by scholars, a bonding capital “is exclusive, inward looking and tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous identities” (Alcoff 2010, p. 168). Bridging capital tends to be inclusive, connecting people of diverse backgrounds, for example, and may create “broader identities and reciprocity” (Hewstone et al. 2010, p. 468). Falk and Surata (2011) add “linking ties”
involving “people/organisations in power/authority” as vertical influences involved with trust in governance (p. 45). Trust in social relationships is closely related to these types of social capital as well as networks and social norms. Both formal and informal networks are essential: club associations with membership rules and informal networks such as neighbourhood casual interactions. Fukuyama develops a broad social analysis based on a view of trust as “the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms” (1995, p. 27). Kramer, Brewer, and Hanna describe four categories of trust: reciprocity-based, elicitive, compensatory, and moralistic (1996, pp. 373–376).

Falk and Balatti (2004, p. 50) report on research which shows that knowledge and identity resources are central for the development of social capital (Falk & Harrison 1998; Falk & Kilpatrick 2000). In the interests of their communities, participants draw on their “personal and social resources” to take on new roles and modify behaviour, “as they may act in new roles, change their behaviour, be self-confident and willing to act for the common good of their community” (p. 50). Falk and Balatti (2004) argue that the work of the “community of practice” (Wenger, 1998) which “resonates with ‘learning organisation(s)’” (p. 50), such as school learning communities, can be generalised further, “to call the groups in which this activity occurs ‘communities of common-purpose’” (p. 50). Significantly, they therefore claim “that the resources required for a community to build social capital are associated with knowledge and identity, and that they require opportunities of different kinds to allow the interactions to create the social capital” (p. 51). Recent literature on social capital (Svendsen & Svendsen 2009) recognises the diversity of social capital explanations and suggests that trust is the most important aspect of social capital (p. 2). Svendsen and Svendsen (2009) take the view that there are many aspects to social capital, and they are all worthy, suggesting that trust works to make social capital happen (p.2). The authors use a
School Trust: Situated to Maximize School Improvement

visual metaphor, a troika (carriage drawn by three side-by-side horses) representing trust and the balancing influence of economics (transactional costs), political science (institutions) and sociology (norms) in producing social capital (p.3). This theory utilizes the historic literature and places trust as the all-important enabler.

Putnam (1995) defines social capital as “features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 67). Putnam (2000) attributes the decline in political, religious, and civic participation, as well as workplace connectedness, to tenuous social bonds weakened by a lack of interpersonal trust. Developing strong social bonds, on the other hand, forms a type of trust that is the catalyst for healthy interdependent relationships. Putnam et al. (1993) argue that the basic problem of a democratic society is the creation of voluntary associations because only through their dense networks of interpersonal trust and cooperation and collective action can the “free-rider” dilemma be overcome (Misztal 1996, p.58). According to Putnam (2000), high levels of social capital, or trust, within a given community is the basis of cooperation and contributes to a more efficient functioning of democracy and a more innovative economy. It is noted here that Putnam interchanges social capital and trust, thus demonstrating how interconnected these concepts are. Putnam (1993) maintains that, “social trust in complex modern settings can arise from two related sources; norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement” (p. 171). Trust emerges in Putnam’s work as an important dimension of social capital, and trust is variously described as the critical component of any social cohesion.

The success of any network of civic engagements, such as political parties (seen as networks of interpersonal communication and exchange), is a direct result of the network’s ability to tap into a local stock of social capital (for example, into other civic networks).
Putnam (1993) suggests that a direct connection exists between the enhanced quality of social life, on the one hand, and civic engagements and norms of reciprocity, on the other. Putnam posits that social capital is “path dependent”, and consequently it is at its strongest when embedded in traditions of civic culture, which teach people to regard “the public domain as more than a battleground for pursuing personal interest” (p. 88). More specifically, his assertion that values reflect a society’s cultural heritage implies that a society is indifferent to government action. However, the recent literature on social capital (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2009), in general and trust in particular, has devoted increasing attention to the role of public institutions. In so doing scholars have responded to one of the most frequent criticisms made against Robert Putnam’s seminal Making Democracy Work (1993), namely that it neglected the role of the State in generating social capital. This oversight has largely been corrected by nearly two decades of research on trust and social capital.

Coleman (1990) refers to the dense social ties within networks that make it easier to communicate, including mutual expectations and whether parties are meeting their obligations: this he called trustworthiness. Network closure pertains to relational density among individuals, and individuals’ trustworthiness. Coleman (1988) conceived of social capital with reference to the closure of networks that produces social control and norms of obligation, where people are held responsible to meet their obligations within the social network. According to Falk and Kilpatrick (2000), Coleman’s development of social capital (1988; 1990) “is part of a social theory which merges micro and macro levels of concern yet does not show how these levels might connect empirically, a problem he also notes” (p. 4). The aspect of interpersonal dynamics or micro dynamics is needed and is explored further in the next section on sociological trust.
A holistic or macro scale sociological view of social structures, such as a school environment, investigates patterns of behaviour or networks between individuals and the whole structure. A micro examination shows how norms are developed and behaviour is shaped with the people within the social system. According to Anderson and Carter (1999), both polar views of micro and macro social systems influence each other. He argues, “any system is by definition both part and whole. No single system is determined, nor is system behaviour determined at only one level, whether part or whole” (p. 5). As a result, individuals who are networked or interact, mutually influence each other’s behaviour (Anderson & Carter 1999, p. 4). In relation to trust, it is argued here that when both “bonding” or inclusive relational social practices and “bridging” or exclusive rule driven social practices influence each other, they work as a social network and mutually influence the individuals involved and the social macro system. For example, when individuals emotionally support close friends and fulfil wider social obligations beyond the immediate inclusive relationship, they contribute to the wider macro social network in which they live. Falk and Guenther (1999) recognise that social capital includes the “networks and social interaction which provide the vehicle for productive output requiring processes between individuals, groups, communities and organisations that potentially influence mutual social benefit” (p.3). This notion is supported in a school setting where networks and interactions between students, staff and parents work together as well as influencing the wider macro school structure.

Further to this, Fukuyama (1995) uses a social capital framework to evaluate the effectiveness of national economics and this includes social trust. He argues that social capital is “the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups and organizations” (p. 10). Bryk and Schneider (2002) demonstrated, in their Chicago school research, the relationship between school effectiveness and members’ commitment to
common purposes and specifically, by the “quality of social ties across the school community” (p. 13). Bryk and Schneider’s important findings demonstrated that “high levels of social trust among individuals and institutions create more efficient production arrangements than in situations where it is necessary to rely on direct monitoring and extensive legal mechanisms to regulate economic transactions” (p. 13). These results have vital implications for social capital and relationship development and maintenance in schools.

Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) identify four assumptions that underpin their comprehensive analysis of social capital. These are summarised as a learning process, and the product of social capital that develops “collective well-being, a process which reflects the cultural fabric on the context, and that social capital is a resource that can be accessed in the future” (p. 8). Closely aligned with the work of Falk and Guenther (1999), Coleman, and Putnam, social capital, as described by Falk and Kilpatrick (2000), is:

the product of social interactions with the potential to contribute to the social, civic or economic well-being of a community-of-common-purpose. The interactions draw on knowledge and identity resources and simultaneously use and build stores of social capital. The nature of the social capital depends on various qualitative dimensions of the interactions in which it is produced, such as the quality of the internal–external interactions, the historicity, futuricity, reciprocity, trust and the shared values and norms (Falk and Kilpatrick 2000, p. 23).

Building on the international research, the OECD (2010) reports to their 34 member countries in the publication, The Nature of Learning: Using research to inspire practice, which recognises the direct link of social capital with learning and economic advancement.
The OECD expands their description of social capital by including the important role of social bonds, trustful relationships, and communities of practice. They draw on the work of Newmann (1996) in regards to shared norms and the role of collective commitment toward high academic standards, and correlating data that shows how important these factors are. Further analysis of the literature reveals that many school factors within schools “have been correlated with higher teacher satisfaction and retention, higher student engagement, student commitment to learning and higher student achievement” (Bryk & Schneider 2005; Newmann & Wehlage 1995; Louis & Marks 1998; Talbert & McLaughlin 1999; Leana & Pil 2006 as cited in OECD 2010, p. 303–304).

2.4.2 Definitions of social trust

This section situates synthesised trust and distrust literature in pertinent political, economic, and cultural contexts as a vastly diverse and complex societal phenomenon. The interest and research pertaining to trust has grown at an exponential rate in the last 20 years (Marková et al. 2008; Marty 2010). Putnam (1993) marked a scholarly interest in trust, resulting in an array of major works (Fukuyama 1995; Misztal 1996; Seligman 1997; Sztompka 1999; Uslaner 2002; Warren 1999) about social trust. Castelfranchi and Falcone (2010) cite Castaldo (2002) and report that the increase in trust definitions in the period from 1990 to 1999 was 51 per cent, totalling 72 definitions (p. 8). They posit that this increase has not led to convergence of concepts. Rather, these new definitions reveal “the degree of confusion and ambiguity that plagues (the many) definitions of trust” (p. 9). “A strong common theoretical kernel for characterising the general notion has yet to emerge” (p. 7). Castaldo, according to Castelfranchi and Falcone (2010), conducted a content analysis of trust definitions, synthesising 72 trust definitions, rendering five partially converged general categories of these trust definitions to 1999. These categories—the construct, the trustee, actions and behaviours, results and outputs, and the risk are
described below (p. 9). However, Castelfranchi and Falcone argue that Castaldo’s analysis “fails to provide a stronger account of the relationships among these recurring terms in trust definitions” (p. 9). While these categories are useful, the 13 year gap between 1999 and 2012, means the findings are significantly dated. Further, these past 13 years has seen a considerable expansion of trust definitions and theories (Maliova & Höhmann 2005). For example, the work of social trust (Bryk & Schneider 2002) contributes significantly to the social understanding of trust in schools.

Marková et al. (2008) claim that “social scientists have suggested that trust and distrust are modern concepts (for example, Barber 1983; Giddens 1990; Luhmann 1979; Seligman 1997), tracing their origin into the 16th and 17th centuries” (p. 18). Seligman (1997) argues that aspects of trust are a modern phenomenon “not generalisable to all forms of social organisation...perhaps it is only a particular form of trust that is modern” (p. 6). Seligman (1997) cites changes in society as reasons for the development of trust. However, evidence is cited in the Christian Old Testament which explicitly mentions trust and provides illustrations of trust played in the narratives (Crenshaw, 2010).

Kinship based in local communities was a premodern tribal kinship trust, “rooted in religious beliefs” (p. 20). Trust helps create a moral community amongst members by affording social capital that exists in a form of “generalised” trust (Seligman 1997, p. 77). Seligman argues that macro social changes evolved interpersonal trust and institutional confidence. Marková et al. (2008) describe these relational changes: require “interactions with strangers, customers, patients, and so on require different kinds of communication styles, communication activities, and genres” (p. 18). Prior to modern society, small community villages ensured that all members knew each other and “strangers” lived
outside of the immediate village and were viewed as threats. Describing the differences, Seligman says:

the “trust” existent between members of a relatively undifferentiated, tribal society would, one intuitively feels, be of a very different order than that bestowed (or withheld) among modern, contracting, market-oriented individuals, citizens or nation-states (1997, p. 6).

Social scientists associate the emergence of trust and distrust discourses with the European individualism and with the explicit formulation of the concept of social recognition. Partly in response to these societal developments in the transition to modern society, more importance came to be placed on human agency and the formation of new institutions. Scholars “referred to the growth of crime and violence, to litigations and lawsuits against professionals, and viewed these incidents as signs of danger threatening democracy” Marková et al. (2008, p. 3).

Castelfranchi and Falcone (2010, p. 9) cite Castaldo’s content analysis of trust definitions which provides five general categories of these trust definitions to 1999. Firstly, the *construct*: trust is conceived “as an expectation, a belief, willingness, and an attitude” (Castaldo 2002). Secondly, the *trustee*: “usually individuals, groups, firms, organisations, sellers, and so on” (Castaldo 2002). Given the different natures of the trustee (individuals, organisations, and social institutions), there are different types of trust (personal, inter-organisational and institutional). These trustees “are often described by reference to different characteristics in the definitions being analysed—specific competencies, capacities, non-opportunistic motivations, personal values, the propensity to trust others, and so on” (Castaldo 2002). Thirdly, *Actions* and *behaviours* are the behavioural aspects of trust and are fundamental for “recognising the concept of trust itself” (Castaldo 2002). Both
trustor and trustee behaviours have to take into account the consistency of the trust relationship—the degree of consistency impacts on the decision to trust or not to trust. Behavioural aspects of trust were also studied, also showing its multidimensional nature (Cummings & Bromiley as cited in Castelfranchi et al. p. 9). Fourthly, Results and outputs: of behaviour, trustee’s actions are presumed to be both predictable and positive for the trustor. The predictability of the other person’s behaviour and the fact that the behaviour produces outcomes that are favourable to the trustor’s objectives, are two typical results of trust. This has been particularly studied in works which suggest models designed to identify the consequences of trust, such as Castaldo’s (2002). Finally, risk: without uncertainty and risk, there is no trust. The trustor must willingly put themselves into a “position of vulnerability with regard to the trustee”. Risk, uncertainty and ambiguity are the fundamental analytic presuppositions of trust, or rather the elements that describe the situations where trust has some importance for predictive purposes (Castaldo 2002).

Castelfranchi and Falcone (2010, p. 17) say that Castaldo’s content analysis revealed the most frequent trust definition terms: “cooperate, mutually, exchange, honesty, commitment, and shared Values”. They select eight trust authors and critically demonstrate the diversity and often inadequacies of these definitions (pp. 19–31). Castelfranchi and Falcone iterate that the trust phenomenon is “a complex structure of representations, related feelings, dispositions, decisions, and actions” (p. 361).

As we have read, confusion around the exact meaning of trust is a sympto m of its complexity. A number of scholars (such as, Marková, Linell & Gillespie 2008; Möllering 2001) posit that the confusion is derived from Luhmann’s (1988) perception that trust has never been a subject of mainstream sociology, saying that “neither classical authors nor modern sociologists used the term in a theoretical context” (p. 94). Marková et al. (2008)
suggest that this contributed to scholars seeking clarification on trust, “for example, familiarity (Luhmann, 1988), confidence (Giddens 1990; Luhmann 1988; Seligman 1997), and faith (Seligman 1997), among others” (p. 8).

Luhmann (1979) says that trust “accumulates as a kind of capital” (p. 64). However, Hardin (2001) argues an alternative perception, saying that Luhmann is probably describing social relationships. Clarifying, Hardin (2001) states that “relationships, of course, ground trust in those participating in them: we are trustworthy to each other in various understandings” (p. 23). Hence, the confusion arises as trust is an element of social capital. Hardin sees trust as part of social relationship networks, both a result and precondition of trust. This makes a distinction with generalised trust which, as Hardin defines it, is trust with “random others in society” as opposed to social networks with friends (p. 24).

Fukuyama and Putnam advanced the idea of trust as the key to democratic participation and to economic success. Fukuyama (1995) argues that trust is critical to economic performance since “people who do not trust one another will end up cooperating only under the system of formal rules and regulations” (p. 27). In other words, we do not need to rely on extensive regulations to prevent others from cheating. In high-trust countries, such as the USA, Japan and Germany (1995, p. 258), the existence of a supportive culture of “spontaneous sociability” (Fukuyama 1995, p. 27) a subset of social capital needs a readiness to cooperate with others in an economically productive way that results in the flourishing of numerous institutions and associations, which are seen to be a good in themselves.

Like Seligman (1997), Putnam’s distinction is one between the Generalised and the Particularised trust (pp. 75–100). Specifically, Putnam focuses on trust which originates
from personal relationships with specific people: “trust embedded in personal relations that are strong, frequent, and nested in wider networks is sometimes called thick trust” (p. 137). Opposite to this is trusting the members of our own community who we do not know, which Putnam calls the Generalised or thin trust, an integral part of social capital. He uses the expressions social and Generalised trust as synonyms, the practice later to be adopted by most other authors who dealt with the same subject. According to Putnam, this generalised trust enables us to extend the scope of trust beyond the circle of people we know personally.

Putnam et al. (1993) recognise trust as the most vital dimension of social capital (p. 186): the one that facilitates citizens’ cooperation. Detailed explication of the concept of trust is made in another study (Putnam 2000, pp. 134–48), where the types of trust posited are fundamental dimensions of social capital. Putnam first says that social capital is about the social and not the political trust. In his opinion social trust is horizontal and refers to the trust among citizens of a political community, while political trust is vertical and refers to the trust of citizens in social and political institutions.

Early announcements of societal change were made by scholars, such as Putnam (1995). Marková et al. (2008) cite numerous publications which present societies’ increased concern and distrust in a range of 21st century political, economic, and cultural contexts. They describe this contemporary context as, “a vastly heterogeneous and complex societal phenomenon that requires theoretical precision” (p. 6). They refer to the growth of social collapse (crime, the threat of terrorism and violence), lawsuits against professionals, and even early signs of pervasive threats to democracy. Marková et al. cite that:

social, political, and economic relations have become too complex, and that the enlarged quantity of information and communications, fragmentation of
knowledge, economic catastrophes, and unpredictability of events all have led to asking questions about trust and distrust” (pp. 3–4).

The paradox of the “audit society” (Power, 1999) is that: on one hand it espouses claims of internal governance while, on the other it expects discourses of trust. Marková et al. (2008) identify the “dichotomy of public discourses and in the media, and consequently, in human and social sciences...the new, dichotomy of “trust versus fear”, resulting in “high levels of uncertainty, but indeed, of hysteria” (Marková, Linell & Gillespie 2008, p. 5). They argue that this gives rise to altered socialisation patterns of fear, anxiety and significantly “inauthentic and insincere communication...loss of dignity, the crisis of identity resulting from adaptation to totalitarianism, passivity, non-involvement, and non-communication” (p. 5). Hardin (2004, p. 136) refers to a “collective paranoia” and the possibility of “cognitive and behavioural consequences” and the suspicion associated with mistrust.

Marková et al.’s (2008, p. 11) “General structure of the trust–distrust complex” (see Figure 2), Four quadrants of trust-distrust complex) represents a holistic and multi-dimensional nature of trust and distrust and is used here to refer to the trust-distrust literature. The four quadrants are divided by two continua: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal line, moving from left to right, describes Primary (taken-for-granted trust), to Reflective trust. The vertical line moves from the bottom to the top, from Micro-social trust to Macro-social trust. These lines delineate four quadrants: quadrant one Basic trust (ontological), quadrant two A priori generalised trust (based on Simmel’s work), quadrant three Contextual-dependent (context-specific) trust, and quadrant four Inner dialogicality. The main purpose here is to use the framework to review definitions and understandings of trust. This is achieved by explaining each quadrant which has a particular focus on the trust literature and schools.
Firstly, quadrant one and two, on the left-hand and right side of the trust complex is primarily about trust as feelings such as security: human relational needs such as interdependence between the self and others, or associated with the search for security, and social cohesion. Secondly, the right-hand quadrants, three and four, Marková et al. (2008) describe trust and distrust as “theoreticalised and rationalised, and progressively transformed into their strategic and calculated forms” (p. 19). These right-hand quadrants are summarised as being contractual, and based on obligations and morality. A progression or continuum is evident from left to right and from bottom to top. For example, the bottom right-hand side is the personal and private quadrant and the top right-hand side represents less interpersonal trust-distrust into professional, group, organisational, and institutional forms of trust. These are characterised strongly by role rights and obligations. These four quadrants are now discussed.
Quadrant one, (see Figure Two) Basic trust is located in the bottom left quadrant of Marková et al.’s (2008, p. 11) “General structure of the trust–distrust complex” (see Figure Two, Four quadrants of trust-distrust complex). The boundaries are delineated by micro-social trust and taken-for-granted trust...Basic trust is characterised by two categories here: (1) Basic trust (ontogenetic) (a) openness to others, (b) asymmetric relation in trust, and (2) primary taken-for-granted trust.

Marková et al. (2008, p. 12) cite developmental psychologists such as Trevarthen (1979, 1992), Newson (1979), Stern (1985), Papousek and Papousek (1975), and Braten (1998) in relation to openness toward others. To understand Basic trust, this complex domain draws on the empirical work of scholars about innate intersubjectivity or openness and readiness for communication and innate predisposition for interactional reciprocity. This is a developmental frame and describes how the infant enters into relations with another human. Trevarthen (1992, p. 102) maintains that understanding intersubjectivity can provide an explanation of “how human social and cultural knowledge is created, how language serves a culture and how its transmission from generation to generation is secured” (p. 12). Openness toward others also refers to primary sociability from the perspective of the baby.

Developmental psychologists describe basic forms of trust, between mother and baby found within various social, philosophical, sociobiological approaches and child development studies. Marková et al. (2008) cite evidence from developmental psychology that shows a “newborn infant already possesses the openness toward others (i.e., the capacity to initiate and to respond to communication)” (p. 11). Marková et al. cite Smith (2004) regarding the origins of sociability and claim that these are:
innate and attachment between the mother and the baby releases neuroactive peptides in the brain of both participants and has a mutual effect of comfort, soothing, and calming. It is from such mechanisms that reciprocity and intersubjective relationships develop: “sociability is a ground form of the human condition” (Smith, 2004, p. 214) cited Marková et al. (2008, p. 13).

In relation to brain chemistry, the hormone oxytocin, which is released by the mother during breast feeding, is discussed in relation to trust by Castelfranchi and Falcone (2010, p. 361). They cite a study about oxytocin release as a “clear mechanism established by Kosfeld et al. (2005) about a social predisposition of trusting behaviour based on oxytocin” (p. 361). Nowakoski et al. (2010, p. 45) cite neurobiological research of Baumgartner et al. (2008) on the effects of intranasal administration of oxytocin on interpersonal trust. The findings suggest that “oxytocin increased individual’s risk-taking behaviours in social interactions” and this increase appears while decreasing fear (p. 45). Nowakoski et al. (2008) report that oxytocin appears to act at the subconscious level and “enables humans to overcome their aversions to betrayal such that they increase their trust in social relationships” (p. 45). While these findings may not directly provide more clarity around defining trust, they provide results that relate interpersonal trust with risk taking and social relationships, both of which are central to trust in a school context. The implication may be drawn that learning and work environments which promote risk taking may encourage supportive social relationships and trust. This psychological and cognitive aspect of trust clearly integrates into the context of a school social setting. Similar to the troika metaphor (Svendsen & Svendsen 2009, p. 2) many factors influence trust and here the dynamic between the psychological, cognitive and social context all impact on the degree of trust at a given time.
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Included in Marková et al.’s (2008) Basic trust concept is (b) an asymmetric relation that takes the form of a highly asymmetric dependency, whether it is child–parent dependence and protection or religious dependence and trust in God or other symbolic objects. These relations, they claim, develop reciprocal trust. Marková et al. cite Baier (1986) to clarify that the theory is not claiming that all dependence relationships are necessarily related to trust.

The second concept presented by Marková et al. (2008) in this first quadrant is primary (2) taken-for-granted trust. They draw on the work of Erikson (1968), originator of Ego psychology and scholar of development psychology. Marková et al. say that Erickson’s contribution to “basic trust” is the theories of developmental mental life of children, before feelings of autonomy and initiative develop. The ego emerges from a stage of wholeness that is a matter of physiological equilibration maintained through mutuality between mother and baby: one that engenders trust. Trust evolves through mutual experiences such as communication which perpetuate security and stability. The baby develops a sense of basic trust of the self/other relation. Marková et al. say that that baby moves from the basic trust toward a primary (taken-for-granted) trust that involves learning, experience, and reflective thinking and feeling. Mutual trust develops and eventually transforms into more mature forms of morality during child socialisation. This child to mother trust is “linked to the feeling of security in its own culture” (p. 13). At the institutional level, schools can provide scaffolding and support for parents, such as providing parents friendly information about school programs so as to instil confidence and trust in the parents. Marková et al. suggest that, “if the adult feels confident and secure, the child’s trust has a good chance to thrive” (p. 13).

Marková et al.’s (2008) second quadrant, is located on the top left-hand side, A Priori generalised and is bounded by primary taken-for-granted trust and macro-social trust.
According to Marková et al. (2008) Simmel coined ontological, A priori generalised trust: the reciprocal relations of humans toward one another in broader societal contexts. Simmel viewed trust as “one of the most important synthetic forces within society” (1950, p. 318). Trust is perceived as an essential component of society according to Simmel:

Without the general trust that people have in each other, society itself would disintegrate, for very few relationships are based entirely upon what is known with certainty about another person, and very few relationships would endure if trust were not as strong as, or stronger than, rational proof or personal observation (Simmel 1978, pp. 178–9).

Marková et al. (2008) posit that there are two aspects of Simmel’s (1950) perspective that assist people to leap from a priori and primary trust, quadrants one and two, to theoretical and reflective trust, quadrants three and four respectively (p. 16). These two ideas are (a) social differentiation, and (b) trust and knowledge.

Simmel’s social differentiation is a human process marked by one’s capacity to perceive and understand phenomena (Marková et al. 2008, p. 16). Social differentiation, including trust, is a basis of any social relations and individuality as understood in relation to other people. As described above, ontologically speaking, the child uses its innate capacity for intersubjectivity, and learns to differentiate different mental states, including trust and distrust of self and others.

Marková et al. (2008) state that “throughout periods of time, human relationships have increasingly diversified and have become “objectified” and “impersonal” (p. 16). The development of social groups, associations, and institutions is characteristic of social differentiation. This objectification of society sees people interacting with “strangers”,

(p. 12). According to Marková et al. (2008) Simmel coined ontological, A priori generalised trust: the reciprocal relations of humans toward one another in broader societal contexts. Simmel viewed trust as “one of the most important synthetic forces within society” (1950, p. 318). Trust is perceived as an essential component of society according to Simmel:
remaining anonymous interacting through impersonal relations. Mutually beneficial transactions are divided by institutional roles and the associated obligations. “The division of labor has also meant that trust could no longer refer to the totality of the individual but only to specific competencies or personal qualities relevant to specific, contextually limited situations” (p. 16).

Simmel’s second idea, trust and knowledge, relates to the interdependent formation of trust and knowledge. According to Marková et al. (2008), socialisation is contextual within different kinds of knowledge and this establishes the quality of trust between people. This contextual notion of trust and knowledge also includes “a stranger” who may hold special knowledge or a professional position such as a teacher. Marková et al. (2008) say, “Since we can hardly obtain full knowledge of one another, trust is situated both within the realm of knowledge that individuals form of one another and beyond its boundaries” (p. 17).

The third quadrant (see Figure 2 Four quadrants of trust-distrust complex) is located on the top right right-hand side of Marková et al.’s (2008) trust–distrust complex. Unlike quadrants one and two, trust relations are being established between strangers or institutions and between organisations and groups of various kinds. This quadrant represents Context-dependent or Context-specific forms of trust, and includes a variety of forms ranging from cooperation to audits, Machiavellian strategies, and calculations (p. 19). Marková et al. claim that trust in the third quadrant is “now theoreticalised, it can be thought about and is symbolically communicable” (p. 19), whereas in quadrants one and two, trust and distrust are categorised as feelings, “either based on the interdependence between the self and other, or associated with the search for security and social cohesion” (p. 19). In the third quadrant context-dependent/context-specific, Marková et al. posit that to “obtain full knowledge of one another, [is difficult in modern society] trust is situated both within the
realm of knowledge that individuals form of one another and beyond its boundaries...trust is very much person and content specific” (p. 10). For example, a patient may trust a Doctor to diagnose a medical problem on one hand, but on the other hand, not trust the same Doctor to fix a mechanical problem. Over time, common contextual-specific situations are taken-for-granted and commonly understood that trust is an outcome: “once trust becomes so established, it can transform into common knowledge and habitual thinking” (p. 19). In such cases it is present as an inherent part of discourse and is taken-for-granted as Schein (2010, p. 21) explains, professional discourses are established over time, and members of a profession share professional cultural assumptions and “taken-for-granted” context and context specific ways of doing business. For example, Teachers have a collective professional understanding of their rights and obligations pertaining to student safety. It is suggested here that the trust generated from these professional environments is situated.

As a result of these transformations from trusting individuals to organisations, trust and distrust has become a generalised social phenomenon in relation to anonymous and unidentified “others”. Institutional interactions or role dependent rights and obligations determine relationships. Some professional roles have historically evolved to enable disclosure of information that would, outside of the role be considered sensitive, such as doctor consultations, and at times teachers and school leaders. Marková et al. (2008) described these functions as an institutional role and as such “the professional party may voice identities of the institution, the professional expertise, and that of the compassionate other (human being)” (p. 20). Consequently, trust and confidence is associated with the institution. Aspects of trust associated with roles and trust and distrust at the research site are examined in Chapter Four.
Finally, the fourth quadrant (see Figure 2 Four quadrants of trust-distrust complex) is located in the bottom right. The Inner dialogicality quadrant is delineated by micro-social and reflective trust: interpersonal and intrapersonal trust as well as communication.

Marková et al. (2008) cite Bakhtin’s work, saying that Inner dialogicality is the “capacity of humans to carry out internal dialogues”, such as “dialogues within the self” (p. 21). Basically, this refers to self-reflection or internal dialogue which considers past and future predications of Ego and Alter of trust and distrust, certainty and uncertainty. This thesis reports a vignette monologue (see section 4.3.2.3) about internal concerns regarding the school improvement agenda at the Vivaldi School. This internal dialogue reflects internal self-confidence and self-doubt of the conscious and unconscious mind.

Marková et al. (2008) claim that this quadrant is where “individuals develop an awareness of how, where, when, and why they can trust, or have confidence in, specific others (and in themselves) (p. 22). Also, they posit that responses which fail to reflect authentic trust are masked by pretend trust. In this reflective space, the Alter Ego make decisions whether to share secrets and gossip with others or not. Marková et al. (2008) cite Simmel’s (1950) notions like “discretion” and “secret” and personal determination of those with whom “self shares or does not wish to share discreet knowledge” (p. 22). Secrets as an important factor associated with trust at the Vivaldi School are discussed in Chapter Four.

Another strategy discussed by Marková et al. (2008) relates to self-presentation: “concealing or imparting misleading information about the self...based on the Ego’s distrust of the Alter who might misuse knowledge or information about the self and pass it on to the third party” (p. 22). This was a small feature at the research site where some individuals were suspicious about others’ honesty and levelled distrust toward some individuals, primarily based on their perceived or imagined conspiracy. There were also secrets and
internal exclusive trust which “unites members of specific groups or associations and separates them from others” (p. 23). These special groups can lead to in-groups and out-groups and their code of conduct is not necessarily moral. Marková et al. (2008) give an example of the Mafia (p. 23). Sztompka (1999, p. 5) says that an individual’s “moral space” is identified by “three vectors”: expectancy of others to trust, obligation to act loyally, and caring for other’s interests. He posits that it is these “three vectors in which each individual is situated” (p. 5).

Finally, to summarise, significant changes in the formation and understanding of trust are seen in a dynamic continuum, expressed in both vertical and horizontal frames. Marková et al. (2008) provide an in-depth trust–distrust complex in which processes and dynamics of trust in schools can be viewed and built upon. The authors trust continuum begins in quadrant one, and articulates the basic personal needs from a developing baby through the maturing child stages and situating basic asymmetric human relational needs of interdependence between the self and others. For Primary Schools, this model is particularly relevant for young children who hold developing levels of trust based on their feelings and learned behaviours of openness to others and primary sociability which are eventually developed into a taken-for-granted trust. Understanding these early conceptions of trust, such as reciprocity, mutual trust, and language that are taken for granted enables teachers to support the development of social risk taking in children in order to help overcome anxieties of betrayal. Parents of young children at school may respond in a supporting manner when they feel confident in the school and this in turn supports their child’s security needs in a new school environment, according to Marková et al. (2008).

Quadrant two represents social trust and identifies with the Simmel-coined ontological, a priori generalised trust: the reciprocal relations of humans toward one another in broader
SCHOOL TRUST: SIOTATED TO MAXIMISE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

societal contexts. Social differentiation, and trust and knowledge, are learnt and implemented. Educational resources such as Tribes: a new way of learning together (Gibbs & Bennett 1994) teach communication agreements or social norms which help build shared morality. Classroom and leadership resources are used in which group norms and collective identity are encouraged (Goleman 2006; Rath & Harter 2010).

The third quadrant moves from the personal to a theoretical, strategic form of trust based on rights and obligations. For children, a school may be one of the first significant influences of an institution which is governed by professional forms of trust centred on work roles. Children are now expected to learn to trust people beyond their immediate family circle. Despite anxieties of “stranger danger” in the media, children are now expected to spend long periods of time away from their families and with relative strangers. Parent education on these changes and detail about staff roles may help alleviate their anxieties. Trust is now contextually dependent for children and their families. Institutional trust and distrust is situated in quadrant three: role and institutionally dependent.

Both quadrants three and four are characterised by internal dialogue which encompasses reflections on reactions toward a society characterised by fragmentation. According to Marková et al. (2008), dramatic changes in society have resulted in a “dramatic increase of reflective thought...largely due to changes in communication resulting from printing and literacy” (p. 23). New forms of trust and distrust are generated from reflections and self-doubt. Concerns about families, professions, institutions, and organisations are features of the 21st Century. This final quadrant is expressed in a teacher vignette monologue in Chapter Four (see 4.3.2.3 Vignette Three: Staff perspective). An inclusive trusting school culture is aided by personal integrity (Killinger 2010) and reflexive leadership judgments, such as selection of the most suitable leadership Decision Making approach
Leadership decision making, as described by Snowden and Boone (2007) are situated in Marková et al. (2008) quadrants three and four. Given the foregoing discussion of the dynamic and complex nature of trust and considering the multifaceted nature of schools, the detail given adds justification for a detailed understanding of trust in schools.

2.4.3 Ethnomethodology

Silverman (1998, 2006) has a long history of applying analytical techniques derived from ethnomethodology (EM). In particular, he has studied directly with Sacks and further extended his work. Sacks was the originator of Conversational Analysis (CA) and a colleague of the founder of EM, Garfinkel, was influenced by Schutz, the creator of phenomenology. Before proceeding to specifically place trust within the EM historical context, Silverman’s definition of ethnomethodology (2006) was:

the study of folk—or members’—methods. It seeks to describe the methods that persons use in doing social life. Ethnomethodology is not a methodology but a model (Silverman 2006, p. 401).

EM is concerned with human social interaction and thus, trust. Garfinkel (1967) is an early theorist of trust who studied human interactions to understand explicit and implicit discourse. In relation to trust, two passages of Garfinkel’s (1967) text are selected by Jayyusi (1984, p. 236) as examples of trust. Each example is followed by a short commentary:

many matters that the partners understand were understood on the basis not only of what was actually said but what was left unspoken (Garfinkel 1967, p. 39).
Garfinkel understands that interaction is framed by moral decisions and reconstituted during interactions. Hence, to maintain order, judgements about discourse are place based on moral foundations, articulating and choosing to stay quiet or tacit on others.

[Trust is] used there to refer to a person’s compliance with the expectancies of the attitude of daily life as a morality (Garfinkel 1967, p. 50).

The degree of interaction—what is said and unsaid—is an indicator, within the context of the interaction, of trust. Jayyusi (1984) explains that the nature of trust is through the “mutual understanding that unfolds in an interactive episode...It is a matter of trust between participants that certain orientations and tacit understandings are taken to be mutually oriented” (p. 236).

In 1963 Garfinkel conducted “breaching” experiments to learn more about trust. These gave direct insight into expectations people hold about communication within a context. For example, at a dinner party, people are expected to act in a predicted manner by asking questions of the host and other guests. The experiments showed that when the predicted interaction is interrupted by an individual who does not apply these known, not-spoken-of scripts, then the conversation and relationship cannot proceed. When shared language and procedures are not reciprocated, these “breaching” experiments showed the complexity of taken-for-granted social structures. Garfinkel discovered that an individual can threaten the shared language and as a result people became confused and could not proceed with the expected dinner party behaviour. Thus, Garfinkel learnt about ordinary constitutive rules and constitutive structure of everyday living and the role trust played in these reciprocal interactions.
Significantly, Garfinkel, according to Watson (2009), in his endeavour to progress EM, posited trust as an integral aspect of communication and “elaborated trust as a necessary background condition of any mutually intelligible interaction” (p. 479). Garfinkel’s analysis of trust appears situated. Watson’s interpretation is that Garfinkel concerns his analysis with the practice of communication, not “the whole person” (p. 478). Both parties must commit to applying the common communication practices to the interaction: this is the application of trust and is situated in the context of the interaction—in situ. Heritage (1978, pp. 93–5) sees these sense-making rules as situated and applied reflexively.

Watson posits that Garfinkel’s research on trust was on everyday matters, the type that are “typically taken for granted, matters (such as trust and constitutive orders) that can then be turned into topics for inspection on their own behalf—somewhat akin to a phenomenon” (p. 479). Through these analyses, the intersubjectivities of everyday life are understood. Basic communication rules, or “‘constitutive accent’, or reciprocally endorsed constitutive expectancies, turn out to be central to the phenomenon of trust” (p. 480). Garfinkel applies trust as an agent of social order. Through the application of rules people feel safe, connected to others and are, in a sense, controlled by the social structure of order in everyday life. So through conversation-analytic transcripts, particular determinations of trust as phenomena of order may be found: a situated moral profile for a given setting.

Silverman (2006) highlights the benefits of Ethnomethodology as its “common—sense practices gives rewarding answers to the “how” questions but underplays the “what” of contextual givens” (p. 57). By applying Ethnomethodological approaches to trust in the Vivaldi School, it is hoped to gain a deeper understanding of how trust is constructed at the
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

School. Ultimately, according to Garfinkel, it is the taken-for-granted social rules that enables or disables groups of people to experience trusting relationships.

2.4.4 Culture

It is argued here that culture and trust are intertwined. Before examining this concept further, the following two paragraphs define culture. Schein (2010), in Organisational culture and leadership, illustrates an in-depth analysis of a number of large international companies. He uses a framework he developed through “intense observation and inductive theory building,” showing three levels of culture. The top level he calls the artifacts, the espoused beliefs and values and assumptions. These are tangible items in the organisation that can be seen and heard. The second layer is the espoused beliefs and values: “what ought to be, as distinct from what is”, such as written policies (p. 25). Shared group values gradually become validated as consensual espoused values and beliefs and may eventually become, with repeated application, hidden assumptions. Schein’s bottom layer he calls the assumptions. These, he argues, are hidden and difficult to define and show little or no resemblance to the artifacts. They may be referred to as “the way we do things around here” (p. 235) and are also reflected in behaviour of group norms, meaning that they do not require discussing. Schein claims that it is “this level of basic assumptions and their interconnections that defines some of the essence of the culture—the key genes of the cultural DNA” (p. 44). Assumptions are created by founding leaders of the organisation and are maintained and developed by the members thereafter. When a problem is solved with a solution, repeatedly, it becomes a tacit or hidden assumption and explanations are not required.
According to Schein (2010), an organisation’s assumptions influence the beliefs and behaviours. These are “taken-for-granted”, difficult to determine or hidden and originally created by the founding leaders of an organisation as they create the culture.

Schein believes that the phenomenon of leadership and culture are “fundamentally intertwined” (p. xi). He argues that “if elements of culture become dysfunctional, leadership can and must...speed up cultural change” (p. xi). Schein reports that when “the group stated these tacit assumptions, they realised that those assumptions were driving their behaviour far more than the espoused value[s]” (p. 322). Without unearthing assumptions, one “cannot explain the discrepancies that almost always surface between the espoused values and the observed behavioural artifacts” (p. 327). This alignment of espoused values and behaviours is an indicator of “harmony” of an organisation (p. 327). As a result of the dynamic nature of institutional groups, this means that change is a reality needed to survive. A clear understanding of what social assumptions groups hold and how these translate into behaviours helps groups redefine their work and understand how trust is constructed.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon of culture, Schein (2010) defines it as:

a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves its problems of external adaption and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems (Schein 2010, p. 18).

Hence, the importance of culture to organisations—a school in this case—is fundamental to the maintenance of order and inclusion of new members into the culture, as well as
adapting to new challenges. Cameron et al. (2011) argued that culture is both an enabler and an obstacle: culture “creates stability by being the glue that holds the organisation together, including reinforcing” (p. 165). Paradoxically they say that culture also cultivates “adaptability by providing a clear set of principles to follow when designing strategies to cope with new circumstances” (p. 166). Schein argues that it is essential for leaders to understand the deeper levels of their culture to understand the character and identity of the group. Leaders are then able to assess how efficient the assumptions are and also to be informed to deal with anxiety that may be expressed or acted out when assumptions are challenged. The group’s culture is made up of shared patterns of behaviour that have developed over time to deal with external influences, and how to maintain group identity in relation to these, and also with the integration of internal group matters. There is a balance between these two forces. The deep levels of the culture are hard to decipher but once this is understood, Schein (2010) states that it is “easy to understand the other more surface levels (of culture) and deal appropriately with them” (p. 32). Schein uses DNA as a metaphor for these deep levels of hidden, or tacit, culture (p. 42). He posits that, “only by seeing that it is combination of assumptions...that the observable day-to-day behaviour can be explained” (p. 44).

The argument presented here requires an understanding of Schein’s model of organisational culture so that a rational connection between his model and the multipart research questions, of: What is trust?; How is trust constructed?; What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement?; and What impact do rights and obligations have on trust? Essentially, Schein’s model calls for an understanding of the deep levels of day-to-day routines or behaviours he calls the assumptions or DNA. Thus, if trust is part of the school culture, then what are the trust assumptions participant’s hold and share? Given that these assumptions are tacit, or quiet,
then the answer will not be given during interview. However, Membership Categorisation, born out of Ethnomethodology, is one method applied to help reveal these hidden cultural assumptions of trust and these results are presented in Chapter Four (see 4.4 Membership Category Analysis).

### 2.4.5 Trust and children

Very little is reported in relation to the trust literature specifically about trust and children. Specific empirical studies examining the developmental nature of trust is lacking in the current literature. Harbaugh et al. (2003) examined trusting and trustworthy behaviour in children. They designed experiments to determine the impact age has on approaching complex tasks. Students in four different grade levels—third, sixth, ninth and twelfth grade—were studied. The game theory experiments showed little variation in trusting and trustworthy behaviour. The researchers conclude that the data suggests that if these trusting and trustworthy traits “develop with age then they are likely to do so when we are very young” (p. 318).

There are, however, studies of trust in education and children are included and central in some investigations. These studies are explored in the previous section on Education and trust, and include 2.2.4 Principals’ influence on learning outcomes; 2.2.5 Trust improves student achievement outcomes; and 2.2 School improvement. Primary research on trust in schools is described in 2.3 Significant research on trust in education.

### 2.5 Summary

Every aspect of the trust literature has undergone a theoretical analysis based on the project’s held ontological (*nature of reality and*) and epistemological (*theory of knowledge and its justification*) paradigm. The relativist position, emphasising the multiple social
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Constructions of realities, the existence of multiple individual constructions, the associated subjective meaning through relationships, and the research field, all contribute to the theoretical framework of the project. Therefore, the nature of trust and how this knowledge and understanding is applied in schools is based on this thesis’ theoretical framework. Many of the underlying assumptions about the world and nature of trust are unconscious and taken for granted, yet influence the way people behave in their social settings.

In conclusion, this chapter establishes the project’s theoretical frame, based on a multidimensional examination of relevant literature relating to three main constituents of school trust—school improvement, trust in schools, and multidisciplinary definitions of trust. The next chapter justifies the selection of methodology, based on the project’s ontological and epistemological theoretical frame.
School Trust: Situated to maximise school improvement

A case study of a primary school

Chapter Three: Methodology
Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Firstly, the researcher’s theoretical framework is situated within the traditions of qualitative design.

In this chapter situates the theoretical framework for the research within the traditions of qualitative research design. The selection of methodology is justified, based on the project’s ontological and epistemological theoretical frame which recognises multiple realities and subjective matters. A critical analysis of the literature concerning paradigm and methodology supports the progression of the project’s methodological decisions—Phase One, the Researcher, and Phase Two, Interpretive paradigms, continue and Phase Three, Strategies of inquiry and interpretive paradigms is presented. Within these phases, the literature which informs methodological decisions and issues is discussed. In particular, the historical perspectives and analytical reasons for selecting strategies of inquiry for this research including case study and ethnography provide the theoretical frame for the data collection and analyses. All approaches are based on the project’s constructivist theoretical frame.

Detail primarily concerned with Phase Four methods of collecting and analysing empirical materials are examined and supported by the literature. Within Phase Four, there are two research stages: The first is Data collection and the second is Data analysis. In Stage One, the research methods of Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) ethics approval, data
source, procedures, interview methods, field note recording and observation verification are presented. In Stage Two, the three data analyses steps take over. The first of these is Thematic Analysis, the second is Grounded Theory, and the final analysis is Membership Categorisation.

The foremost methodological question addressed by this study is: What procedures for collecting, interpreting, and analysing data allow for lucid understanding of trust in the Vivaldi School and the possible creation of understandings that may apply to other schools? Within the methodological requirements to address this multifaceted question, a theoretical framework is argued, as the overarching scaffold, to provide a consistent theoretical approach to all methodological research requirements. Hence, an approach to collect, interpret, and analyse data, and draw conclusions, in order to make recommendations is outlined below.

3.2 Theoretical framework

Further to positioning the research, the research design is based on Denzin and Lincoln’s, Five phases of research (2003; 2005a; 2011a, pp. 11–5), represented in Chapter One, Figure one. Phase One describes how the researcher is “socially situated” upon entering the research field. Issues that shape the researcher’s decision-making are based on her experience, skills and knowledge of “life”, and the research traditions, and these all influence the research design. Some of these points have already been discussed in Chapter One; in particular, the description of the school, Vivaldi Primary School, and the role played by the social, political, and ethical position of the researcher within the Vivaldi School and how these are viewed by the participants. Phase Two, the interpretive paradigms, present the project’s epistemological and ontological interpretive frames bound in the researcher’s beliefs and how these influence the research process.
The selected strategies of inquiry are discussed in relation to the research question in phase Three. Issues of data collection, representation, and legitimation are argued. Phase Four, the methods used to collect and analyse empirical materials at the research site, as discussed in this chapter in relation to the literature. The processes of the data collection and analysis are then discussed in the next chapter. The research design’s final phase is also outlined in the following chapter and will describe the process of interpreting the empirical data and constructing a written text to make sense of the learning. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005a, p. 21), all researchers speak “within a distinct interpretive community that configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act...always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience they have studied”.

The five phases of research design (see 1.4 Research design and Figure 1 Five phases of the research process) are used in this research and are based on what Denzin and Lincoln (2005a, p. 21) call the “traditions”, which refers to generic characteristics of qualitative research that have developed and improved over years. They posit that, “each work tradition is governed by a different set of genres: each has its own classic, its own preferred forms of representation, interpretation, trustworthiness, and textual evaluation.” In this thesis, “tradition” is generically acknowledging the social and cultural history as a backdrop, “characterised by diversity and conflict” and, within the limitations of this thesis, crafting decisions made specifically for this study. Adapting a constructivist world view is built on three assumptions: that meaning is created by humans as they interact and interpret their world, that humans draw on their historical and social perspectives to understand their context, and that meaning is generated through social interaction. This constructivist stance generates all methodological decisions. It reflects the relativist ontology (multiple
constructed realities) and an epistemological subjective where meaning that is created by individuals’ minds impacting on their thoughts and emotions which then impact on the methods selected throughout the five phases of research design. Emphasis is given to capturing the contextual meaning through an inductive theory building approach. Analysis methods examine the participants’ use of language as a means to generate their reality: a socially constructed view of reality through contextual social interaction. These collective constructions of reality are describes by Crotty (1998) as constructionism which is a “collective generation of meaning as shaped by the conventions of language and other social processes” (p. 58). The assumption in the project is that common sense meaning, collectively understood by participants of the Vivaldi School hold a collective constructive culture.

For the purpose of this report the rationale for each of the five phases is described in a linear fashion. However, the reality is that each phase has an interdependent relationship with every phase requiring forward planning and backward checking throughout each process. For example, the procedure of Phase One continues to be applied throughout the entire research process and is not limited only to the beginning phase of the research. Likewise for Phase Two, the interpretive paradigms influence all decisions made in relation to this study from the beginning to the end. However, for the purpose of this study each section will be described one at a time.

### 3.2.1 The Researcher: Phase One

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011a, p. 11) behind the research design of ontology, epistemology, and methodology are interconnecting factors. These are constructed from the persona of the researcher: their personal experiences evolved for their gender, ethnicity, culture, and age and how these and other attributes situate the researcher in
contemporary Australia. As a result, the researcher’s held assumptions applied in this project are socially constructed and contain complex, interwoven and difficult to measure aspects. They are contextual and empathetic in purpose. The approach is emergent and responsive to the participants within the natural setting of the Vivaldi School. The association between the research question’s and a qualitative research approach is purposeful and critical. Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as:

> an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell 1998, p. 15).

Qualitative researchers focus on the socially constructed nature of reality and to do this the researcher has an “intimate relationship” with the researched, including the “situational constraints that shape the inquiry” and hence plays a part in the research where “the observer is at the centre of the research process”, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005a, p. 10). However, the post structural, postmodern view, as expressed by Vidich and Lyman (2000), challenges this notion and reasons that reality is created in the social text of the researcher so the researcher can no longer, in this view, fully live the experience. And this view is coined the “representational crisis” by Denzin and Lincoln (2005a, p. 19). This view will further be developed in the forthcoming section on participant observation, (Toma 2011, p. 268) and in relation to research reliability or validity.

Madison (2011) says that Theory is the guiding principle of research as well as details pertaining to the method. Madison argues that “Theory, when used as a mode of interpretation, is a method, yet it can be distinguished from method (and indeed take a back seat to method) when a set of concrete actions grounded by a specific scene are
required to complete a task” (p. 15). This means that the theoretical assumptions and
theory are applied to fulfil a dual role: both driver of action and the action itself. Madison
cites Murillo (2004) on method, saying “that methods are not simply isolated or immutable
activities, but are contingent on our purpose, our fundamental questions, the theories that
inform our work, and the scene itself” (p. 15).

Mills et al. (2006) state that, “researchers must choose a research paradigm that is
congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality” so that the researcher can
guarantee a strong research design (p. 10). Consciously subjecting such beliefs to an
ontological interrogation in the first instance will illuminate the epistemological and
methodological possibilities that are available. As described above, the researchers bring
their own assumptions that have been influenced by their history and cultural context,
which, in turn, shape their view of the world, the forces of creation, and the meaning of
truth. Often these underlying assumptions about the world are unconscious and taken-for-
granted (Mills, Bonner & Francis 2006; Schein 2010). Constructivism is a research paradigm
that denies the existence of an objective reality. Guba and Lincoln (1989) assert that
“realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exist as many such
constructions as there are individuals although clearly many constructions will be shared”
(p. 43). Creswell (2007) supports this as well, saying that reality is “formed through
interaction with others (hence social Constructivism) and through historical and cultural
norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (p. 21). This belief leads to a research practice
which is to interact with people in the natural setting and this is influenced by what the
researcher brings to the site, their own historical experiences, and cultural footprint. The
intention is to interpret using inductive research method, or “a type of reasoning that
begins with a study of a range of individual cases and extrapolates patterns from them to
form a theoretical category” (Charmaz 2006, p. 188).
Grounded Theory is a research methodology that has an enormous appeal for a range of disciplines due to its explanatory power. This power illuminates common issues for people in a way that allows them to identify with theory and use it in their own lives. Researchers, who first identify their ontological and epistemological position, are able to choose a point on the methodological spiral of Grounded Theory where they feel theoretically comfortable, which, in turn, will enable them to live out their beliefs in the process of inquiry (Mills, Bonner & Francis 2006, pp. 7–8).

In relation to research design decision-making, literature on the tradition of qualitative research supports the researcher writing “using the personal voice” and using the “first-person pronoun” (Creswell 2007, p. 17). Notwithstanding the project’s participant-observer’s total immersion in the research site, a strategic choice is made to report this project in the third person voice. In this case, it has provided a “bird’s eye” or “balcony view” of the process and findings which arguably, for this project’s complexities, have provided cogent analysis from the “balcony view” perspective informed by “dance floor” data. At times, though, it is necessary to move from the “balcony” to the “dance floor” to seek an alternative perspective.

Experienced teachers are recognised as resourceful professionals who use an extensive plethora of approaches to help students construct meaning. Louden (2005) cites Hattie in a study about the quality of teachers, comparing experiences with expert teachers, saying that, “the distinguishing features are seen as overlapping facets of the whole profile so that no one feature by itself is necessary” (p. 21). Louden continues, saying “expert teachers were effective in terms of producing improved outcomes for their students and that the profile reliably differentiated effective teachers from other experienced teachers” (p. 22).
It is suggested here that effective teachers use an eclectic approach, applying a medley of methods to achieve outcomes. There are many research design paths and processes to choose from according to the needs of the research problem and context. Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) present a description that captures these complexities, saying that the qualitative researcher uses “multiple and gendered images: scientist, naturalist, field-worker, journalist, social critic, ...bricolage, and quilt maker...and the researcher, in turn, may be seen in turn as a *bricoleur*, as a maker of quilts, or, as in filmmaking, a person who assembles images into montages” (p. 4). Originally presented by Levi-Strauss (1966): a useful tool “jack of all trades, a kind of professional do-it-your-self” (pp. 16–7), this concept has maintained interest amongst social science researchers (Chueh 2004; Denzin & Lincoln 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2011a) refer to the interpretive bricoleur: “that is, a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of the complex solution” (p. 4). When discussing what practices a qualitative researcher uses in research they say, “The material practices of qualitative inquiry turn the researcher into a methodological (and epistemological) *bricoleur*. This person is an artist, quilt maker, a skilled craftsperson, a maker of montages and collages” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005c, p. 1084). Denzin (2009, p. 87) posits that, “The researcher, as a writer, is a bricoleur...[who] fashions meaning and interpretation of our ongoing experience...and uses any tool or method that is readily at hand.” So, as the experienced teacher collects appropriate resources to advance student learning, the researcher as bricoleur results in an emergent construction.

The researcher takes a reflexive stance throughout the project (Charmaz 2006, p. 131), which “informs how the researcher conducts his or her research, relates to the research participants, and represents them in written reports” (p. 189). Johnson and Christensen (2012) describe reflexivity as a process of “self-reflection by the researcher on his or her biases and predispositions” (p. 593). The idea of going through an ongoing reflective
process and of examining and re-examining the different reasons for conducting the research and the various influences it might have on others (the participants and the community) aims to decrease the risks for all involved and increase the benefits from the study conducted. This process is one of “reflecting critically on the self as the researcher” (Guba, & Lincoln 2005, p. 210). It is part of a broader reflective process of researchers addressing and writing about ethical issues and dilemmas emphasising the need to discuss issues of voice, textual representation, reflexivity, positionality, control, and power relations. Madison (2011) recognises the responsibility researchers have to engage in positional reflexivity:

Positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we denounce the power structures that surround our subjects. A concern for positionality is a “reflexive ethnography”: It is a “turning back” on ourselves (Davis 1999). When we turn back, we are accountable for our own research paradigms, our own positions of authority, and our own moral responsibility relative to representation and interpretation (Madison 2011, p. 8).

By discussing these issues publicly, expanding the understanding of them, and promoting self-examination in the various stages of research, we (researchers) can potentially decrease the violation of participants’ rights and increase our accountability and true obligation to them, to self, and to the professional community. The reflexive monitoring of activity is a chronic feature of everyday action and it involves the conduct not just of the individual but also of others. That is to say, actors not only monitor continuously the flow of their activities and expect others to do the same for their own; they also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in which they move (Giddens 1984, p. 5).
Reflexivity is used throughout the project and provides a methodological framework to address any potential bias and guide the researcher’s data collection and analysis to achieve a high quality study. Through these processes, reflexivity is used as a tool to facilitate transparent and accountable research methodologies which identify and address their limitations. This reflexive insight into what represents the influencing factors, such as the researcher’s values, norms, and institutional pressures that play a role in interpreting and writing the findings helps the mindful researcher make the necessary adjustments to micro and macro practice to maximise authentic process and product of the project.

Fetterman (2010) recognises that “the ethnographer is embedded in the research, a significant departure from the ideology of objectivity” (p. 128). It is a way of recognising and incorporating the researcher’s history and experiences, seeing the researcher’s work as located socially, culturally and personally, and historically. The researcher also needs to be able to move from preconceptions to new knowledge as the data collection and analysis dictates, through the examination of new and unexpected concepts and experiences.

Madison (2011) believes “we are accountable for our research paradigms, our authority, and our moral responsibility relative to representation and interpretation” (p. 16). This inward looking reflexivity supports the analysis of the “participant-observer”. In this study, as a full member of the Vivaldi School community, the participant-observer brings her own knowledge of the community to the design and analysis and the involvement of community members. The objective is to make the researcher’s perspective explicit, establishing a process to recognise and locate the researcher’s input and establishing that the researcher’s perspective is shared and open to scrutiny to encourage the involvement of students, staff and parents as participants.
An important aspect of the ethical considerations of research is the contract between the researcher and researched, as has been described by Stake (1995, p. 91). Stake observed that there needs to be thorough planning, for making conscious decisions about the various roles required during the participant observation. As a participant-researcher whose involvement in the school is long term and extends beyond the life of the research and whose relationship with participants is not limited to the research data collection period, the articulation of the contract is critical. Undertaking research in one’s own learning community raises many of the issues that are implicit in educational research as the researcher may continue to participate in that school long after the research has been completed. Beyond these factors, the researcher’s experience has informed the construction of the study and needs to have an explicit place in the data collection and analysis to ensure alternative views are not subsumed or reinterpreted through this lens. The researcher ensures technical accuracy—negotiation through face-to-face contact and relationships that are reformed continually over time—ensuring credibility and plausibility of the research.

Davies (1999) identifies the main challenges facing ethnographic researchers concerning balancing objectivity and subjectivity. Davies posits that reflexivity is, broadly speaking, “turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference” (p. 4). So the products of research are reflected upon in relation to the way the research is designed and the processes applied. By applying reflexivity, the researcher aims to critique objectivity while recognising the reality of the subjectivity as they bring together multiple perspectives that ultimately make a difference in the school participants’ lives (p. 5). Reflexivity is an integral aspect of this project’s “Phase One, The researcher”, and will continue to guide decision-making and processes throughout all phases of the research process.
3.2.2 Interpretive paradigms: Phase Two

Denzin and Lincoln (2011a) present four main interpretative paradigms for qualitative research: positive–postpositive, constructivist–interpretive, critical (Marxist, emancipator), and feminist–poststructural. Under these main categories, other belief communities, with a relativist ontology, or “multi constructed realities” exist (p. 13). Other eminent authors present similar paradigms. For example, Creswell (2007, pp. 19–23) refers to the four paradigms, or world views: postpositivism, social constructivism, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism. Creswell (2007) argues that interpretative paradigms represent a “distinct body of literature and unique issues of discussion” (p. 23). Denzin and Lincoln (2011b) argue that relativist communities are not as “solidified, nor as well unified” as a paradigm interacting in an interconnected way that connects many parts to a whole (p. 91). Therefore, qualitative research is multiparadigmatic.

Phase Two, the Interpretive paradigms, presents the project’s epistemological and ontological interpretive frames bound in the researcher’s beliefs. The way in which these processes influence the research process are examined. These frames are highly abstract and aim to clarify the project’s philosophical framework before justifying the strategies of inquiry (logic of inquiry) and interpretative paradigms used to collect and analyse data in Phase Three. The intent of this study is to gain a clearer understanding of how a particular school community defines and constructs trust. The deep motivation is a philosophical one: ontologically, epistemologically, methodologically, and axiologically. Initially, the axiological question (concerning values and ethics), presented by Bean, positions this study into a particular set of research traditions. Bean (2011, p. 165) asks, “Is research of value because it is true or because it is useful?” Given the foundations of this study, forthcoming, the premise is to advance the thinking and understanding of trust in schools, as opposed to “discovering the truth”. It is recognised that there are many truths. Therefore, a meaningful
appreciation of the context-specific understanding of trust is sought. It could be argued that all research has some value to someone. However, the philosophical lens to “solve a problem” or “discover the cause” is primarily associated with a controlled scientific line of inquiry. It is argued that this study is constructed around ontological and epistemological beliefs that support the social context of this study and the aims. The investigation will also provide additional insight to the participants, during and after the process, as well as the readers of this body of work. While there will be new knowledge, arguably through a synthesising construction process with researcher and participants, the “truth” of the study is not a guiding paradigm. Rather, it is the usefulness to the participants and wider educational audience.

Existing research literature on multidisciplinary trust theories were reported on earlier (see 2.4 Multidisciplinary trust theories). These originate from a range of research paradigms: positive/postpositive, constructivist/interpretive, critical (Marxist/emancipator) and feminist–poststructural. While a number of them fall outside this theoretical constructivist frame, they still provide relevant information for this project. For example, many of the psychological/cognitive studies are predominantly within the quantitative or positivistic paradigm and mixed methods approach: applying deductive reasoning and claiming high levels of generalisability of findings. By contrast, studies on trust in schools, from a qualitative inquiry perspective, are by comparison limited. However, the existing published peer reviewed works provide a critical starting point for the design of this empirical in-depth case study. Research on human social behaviour, such as social capital, also supports this project as an intellectual discourse: some of these studies are also from a mixed method methodology. Thus, through the utilisation of prior qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies, a theoretical construct of this study is presented.
The constructivist ontological and epistemological positions form the philosophical basis of this project and consequently, methodological theoretical framework. These foundations impact on every aspect of the research process, including the topic, question design, sampling, and researcher’s relationships with the participants, data collection, and analysis. At the core of this inquiry the philosophical assumptions that support the theoretical positioning of this project are based on the research paradigms that refer to a set of ontological and epistemological assumptions. The researcher’s interpretative framework, or paradigms, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011a, pp. 12–3) and Creswell (2007, p. 16), are based on his or her philosophical assumptions of ontological (What is the nature of reality?), epistemological (What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?) or (What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?). When defining the epistemology, Creswell (2007) asks: “What is knowledge and the process of thinking, is it subjective, transactional and co-created?” (pp. 17–8); axiological (What is the role of values?; and methodological premises (What is the process of research?).

The ontology—or the nature of reality and truth—is embedded in the local social context. Knowledge is constructed through interaction and the researcher is required to create knowledge that is reflective of the participant’s reality (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2011, p. 103). The epistemology—what is knowledge and the process of thinking—is subjective, transactional and is co-created (Creswell, 2007, pp. 17–8). Creswell (2007, p. 18) recognises that qualitative researchers conduct their research where participants live and work to seek an understanding of what the participants believe is real. Staying in the research field for extended periods to learn from the participant’s point of view this reduces the objective distance. As a result, “This means we are shaped by our lived experiences, and these will always come out in the knowledge we generate as researchers and in the data generated by our subjects” (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2011, p. 104). The axiological assumptions—the
influence of values—are expressed in the Vivaldi School values and the interpretive biography within the text, and described by Creswell (2007, p. 18) as “positioning” the researcher to recognise the “biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field” (Creamer 2011, p. 268). Lincoln et al. (2011) confirm this: “According to my understanding of the readings, researchers must understand the social context and the culture in which the data are produced to accurately reflect what the data actually means to the study” (p. 113).

Epistemological orientations shape and determine the researcher’s worldview of reality and guide their doctrine upon which the research methodology is constructed (Denzin & Lincoln 2011a, p. 13). Epistemological positions, especially in the area of social science, cover a wide range of complex social experiences. Constructivists maintain that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one’s perspective. This paradigm recognises the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, where meaning is “directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meaning into a few categories or ideas” (Creswell 2009, p. 88). Constructivism is built upon the premise of a socially negotiated reality which is influenced by the historical social interpretation of others. Creswell (2007, p. 21) also append the deep rooted influence of cultural norms to this process. Hence, the social, historical, and political environment in which the participants construct their reality are all intertwined.

The researcher’s role is to position his or herself within the participant’s environment and understand their reality. Through a variety of methods—presented in Phase Three, Methods of collecting and analysing materials—the researcher interprets what is happening, in relation to the research question. An advantage of this approach is the close
collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to
tell their experiences. Through these recounts the participants are able to describe their
views of reality. This enables the researcher to better appreciate the participants’
understandings of their reality. Notwithstanding the lens of the researcher—the interaction
he or she has on the research environment—ultimately influences the participants through
the researcher’s choice of questions and areas of interest from the researcher’s
perspective. “Thus the researchers make an interpretation of what they find, an
interpretation shaped by their own experiences and background” (Creswell 2007, p. 21).

The interpretive approach is supported by anthropologists and ethnographers, their main
challenge being to structure their studies and develop appropriate strategies through which
to collect and analyse the data. Contrary to positivistic studies, which rely on standardised
tools and techniques such as questionnaires, surveys and scales, the process of
constructivist research may involve using unstructured observations, and qualitative
methods are used both for collecting and analysing the data. The results of interpretive
studies have been described as “thick” (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba 2007, p. 17), in depth,
meaningful, historical and linguistically rich. These studies describe details and provide a
comprehensive understanding of cultural phenomena. However, due to the interpretive
character of such investigation the findings may remain subjective. Moreover, the results of
such studies are viewed as highly context-bound. Issues of generalisability are discussed by
Falk and Guenther (2007, p. 2) and “refer to the degree to which research findings are
applicable to other populations or samples (Polit & Hungler 1991; Ryan & Bernard 2000)”.
Falk and Guenther (2007) cite Metcalfe (2005) about generalising being “central to the
definition and creation of valid public knowledge”. They present convincing arguments that
support generalisability in qualitative research, saying that:
generalisability is also possible on the basis of theory building—that is, the ‘inductive’ approach. For example, as patterns of behaviour are observed across multiple and potentially contrasting research objects, conclusions may be drawn about factors that contribute to those patterns—that is, how and why the behaviour occurs. It is possible through a ‘theoretical sampling’ process (Charmaz 2000, p. 519) to build theory so that across a range of scenarios, patterns of behaviour are predictable (and therefore generalisable) (Falk & Guenther 2007, p. 8).

Also, according to Lincoln and Guba (2007, p. 19), transferability into other contexts can be applied when “thick” descriptive data is acquired “about the context so that judgements about the degree of fit or similarity may be made by others who may wish to apply all or part of the findings elsewhere”. Thus, reality is perceived as a multidimensional changing construct.

Schwandt et al. (2007) recognise that research is socially situated—reflective of an intersubjective aspect of interpretation and “[cannot escape] social circumstances such as a web of beliefs, practices, standpoints” (p. 11). This then means that social interpretations are made within a shared social context. Schwandt et al. (2007) argue that the research interpretations are “not simply an individual cognitive act but a social and political practice” (p. 12). This means that the inquiry covers multiple realities that are socially constructed and as the project interrogates these many realities that “tend to produce diverging inquiry” methodology that examines the socially interrelated aspect of the “pieces” in a holistic and contextual manner (Schwandt et al. 2007, p. 17). In this project, the aim is to interrogate the socially situated meanings of trust.
Two other philosophical assumptions, according to Creswell (2009), are the advocacy and participatory world views. While this research is not primarily designed based on an inquiry which is embedded in politics and a political agenda, it does require a conscious and reflexive approach toward these political concepts. Creswell’s definition for advocacy and participatory research states that:

the research contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life. Moreover, specific issues are addressed that speak to important social issues of the day such as endowment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation (Creswell 2009, p. 227).

Soydan (2010, p. 141) draws on the work of Marx and Engels (1969) as advocates of emancipatory concern with knowledge, and interest, when it came to the social theory and empirical studies. This approach is closely connected with the political agenda which lends to social action reform. Typically, this research studies marginalised and disenfranchised people. As to the validity of the research thus conducted, constructivists rely on trustworthiness and authenticity to give their work credibility so that it can then be used to generate action (Guba & Lincoln 1994). The participatory approaches inherently transform the world as they are enacted (Heron & Reason 1997). They produce action. Both systems involve the inquirer as a participant. Constructivism, however, positions the participant in terms of the created knowledge, as a facilitator of the knowledge. The participatory paradigms position the participant as part of collaborative action with the inquirer using self-reflective action and the group creating a product that presents their knowledge (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba 2007).
Further to the concept of paradigm used in this study to describe the “lens” or way of viewing, Thomas Kuhn introduced this concept into scientific literature in 1970 and according to Blaikie (2010, p. 9) and Robert Friedrichs (1970), applied this concept to sociology in the same year. Patton (2002) cautions researchers that while paradigms are important the individual sociological study has unique conditions, stating: “Nor is it necessary to be a qualitative methods purist...not absolute allegiance to some idea; standard of paradigm purity and methodological orthodoxy” (p. 68). However, the value of articulating the project’s theoretical frame, which is based on a set of stated and tacit assumptions or paradigms, is that it assists both the researcher to apply a logical argument and the reader to make meaning from the text based on the coherence.

To further develop a methodological framework to inquire about trust, this study requires clarification of the theoretical perspective on research design. A number of explanations are necessary. The first is about researching people, as opposed to objects. Marshall and Rossman (2006) say that seven types of research are best suited to a descriptive empirical approach that investigates social relations in a qualitative frame. These seven types of research were used, in conjunction with those of other authors to help determine the needs of this project. They argue that the descriptive approach is suitable for “research that delves in-depth into complexities and processes [and] research on little-known phenomena” (p. 53). Trust is also an informal and instructed linkage and process in schools and so warrants a descriptive methodology, according to Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 53). Trust is also a “real organisational goal” that people report they value at the research site, “as opposed to stated organisational goals”.

Another criterion presented by Marshall and Rossman (2006) is the role of experimentation. While psychological experiments, through the literature have had some
impact on the projects understanding of trust, experiments are not contextual or socially situated. However, in order to study trust in a school context, it requires a natural contextual setting and Marshall and Rossman (2006) affirm that it “cannot be done experimentally for practical or ethical reasons” (p. 53). The final criteria presented by Marshall and Rossman is that “research for which relevant variables have yet to be identified” which supports the argument that trust in the School is qualitative (p. 53). This suggestion provides initial support for the project design to adopt a qualitative approach as opposed to a quantitative approach, studying people in their natural setting, the School. A plethora of researchers have made connections with human behaviour and their setting, context and participants’ frames (Creswell 1998; Marshall & Rossman 2006; Thomas 1993); further supporting the notion that behaviour is deeply contextual. Marshall (1999, p. 57) further reinforces this by arguing that the most suited qualitative approach to studying a social phenomenon such as trust, is within a School, and involves a community of people.

3.2.3 Strategies of inquiry and interpretive paradigms: Phase Three

This section builds on the previous section of research paradigms and now selects a research design that fits within the researcher’s interpretative framework as well as with the research questions. Both the Interpretative paradigm and the Strategies of inquiry work together, complementing each other, to fulfil research traditions and meet the contemporary needs of the research site and problem. Denzin and Lincoln (2011a) state that “strategies of inquiry put paradigms of interpretation into motion” (p. 14). This third research phase, “Strategies of inquiry and interpretive paradigms”, positions this phase of the project in relation to all five phases, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011a).

This section concentrates on the methodological and philosophical questions and decisions made in order to construct the most appropriate and effective research design to answer
the research questions. Given that all decisions made regarding research design are done in relation to the research questions (Blaikie 2010), it is helpful to keep the five research questions in mind during this upcoming analysis (see 1.3.2 Research Questions).

This project is constructed within the interstices of three closely aligned strategies of inquiry: case study, ethnography and Grounded Theory. Institutionally and geographically bounded, the school serves as a single case. Within this case, the participant-observer inquires through the in-depth inspection of the phenomenon using ethnographic techniques. Grounded in a natural setting, the researcher collects multiple forms of data over an extended time and co-constructs theory with participants. The research design therefore transcends a one-dimensional strategy to become a complex multi layered network inquiry to understand the trust phenomenon.

3.2.3.1 Strategy: Case study

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe case study as, “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your unit of analysis” (p. 25). Merriam (2009) describes a qualitative case study as, “an intensive, holistic descriptive analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. 40). Merriam identifies some confusion regarding the definition of the case study around the process of studying the case, and the product of the study: “Case studies can be defined in terms of the process of conducting the inquiry (that is, as case study research), the bounded system or unit of analysis selected for study (that is, the case), or the product, the end report of a case investigation” (p. 54). Stake (2006, p. 1) claims that a school may be a case as it is a noun, the case being both the unit of the study, such as the Vivaldi School, and the products or unit of analysis being students, parents and staff.
Case study methodology provides social researchers with credible design traditions to investigate social phenomenon. According to Yin (2009, p. 4) this social phenomenon “allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events”. Case studies may be conducted alone or in combination with other research methods, such as ethnography. A contemporary definition of case study methodology often refers to a bounded area that concentrates on a “data collection tactic” (p. 18). Yin cautions researchers using design strategy methodology, and claiming that case studies are often confused with ethnographies. Yin’s case study definition is:

an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomena (e.g. a “case”), set within its real-world context especially when the boundaries between the phenomena and context are not clearly evident (Yin 2009, p. 18).

Yin asserts that understanding a particular phenomena is important within “textual conditions—because they are highly pertinent”. In relation to this research, trust—the phenomena, is embedded in the context of Vivaldi School. However, the boundaries of this phenomenon, if they exist, are undetermined. Thus, understanding the context and other complexities within the case and how these are connected to the phenomenon is part of the inquiry. According to Yin (2012, p. 4), multiple variables where data comes from multiple sources within the case require inquiry and, as an outcome, an in-depth contextual understanding of a case results. Merriam (2009) “Particularistic means that the case studies focus on the particular situation, the bed, program, or phenomenon... The case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent” (p. 43). Merriam (2009, pp. 24–5) associated phenomenon with philosopher Husserl’s claims that all qualitative research draws from the philosophy of Phenomenology. Patton sees that it is “the phenomenon that is the focus of inquiry may be an emotion—loneliness” (p. 104) and states that a phenomenological approach seeks to understand its essence:
the assumption that *there is an essence or essences to shared experience*.

These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The experiences of different people are bracketed, analysed, and compared to identify the essences of the essences of the phenomenon, for example, the essence of loneliness, the essence of being a mother, or the essence of being a participant in a particular program. The assumption of essence, like the ethnographer’s assumption that culture exists and is important, becomes the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study. “Phenomenological research is the study of essences” (Van Manen 1990, p. 10) (Patton 2002, p. 106).

Multiple data sources are essential in case study research and this strategy also enhances data credibility (Yin 2009, p. 2). Possible data sources may include, but are not limited to, documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artifacts, direct observations, and participant–observation. Yin asserts that surveys techniques, for example, do not reflect the context of the phenomena. In case study, data from these multiple sources are then converged in the analysis process rather than handled individually. Each data source is one piece of the “jigsaw,” with each piece combining to complete the researcher’s understanding of the whole phenomenon. Baxter and Jack (2008) posit that “this convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case” (p. 554). Yin confirms that convergence of multiple data sources contributes to a robust triangulation (2012, p. 13). Further discussion on triangulation and rigor appears in section.

One of the benefits of the interview is that the researcher can reach areas of relativity that would otherwise remain inaccessible, such as people’s specific experiences and attitudes,
which are not normally discussed in the day to day operations of the school. Multiple data sources are established in this project through semi structured interviews of three separate sub-units: students, parents and staff. Within the Vivaldi School, data collection also included observations from the participant-observer, informants and artifacts. These rich data sources were embedded units for the case. Merriam (2009) acknowledges the qualities of case study methodology: saying “Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon” (p. 51).

Yin (2003, p. 45) recognises that holistic case study design that includes embedded units—such as members of a school community (students, teachers and parents)—enables the researcher to explore the case while considering these units’ influences on each other. Situated within the case a variety of analysis approaches, when applied, help convergence of the data. These methods include sub-unit analyses or within case analysis, between case analysis and across all of the sub-units or cross-case analysis. Yin reminds researchers in the workplace that analysis at the sub-unit level is required: “if the data focus only on the individual employees, the study will in fact will become an employee and not an organisation study” (p. 45). Hence, analysis and results of the sub-units must return to the global case issue initially addressed to ensure a holistic analysis of the case.

Propositions may come from the literature, personal or professional experience, theories, and or generalisations based on empirical data (Baxter & Jack 2008, p. 551). A proposition can be applied to “suggest a simple set of relationships” (2012, p. 9). “Both Yin and Stake suggest that the propositions and issues are necessary elements in case study research in that both lead to the development of a theoretical framework that guides the research” (Baxter & Jack 2008, p. 552). The “what” questions are applied to the exploratory case study. Yin provides examples of exploratory questions. The first is “What can be learned
from a study of an effective school?” Yin recommends the use of hypotheses and propositions to progress inquiry into this type of question as well as the exploratory case study. The “how many” or “how much” type of “what” questions do not relate to this inquiry. “What have been the outcomes of a particular managerial restructuring?” Similar are the “who” and “where” questions. When the focus of a study is to answer “how” and “why” questions, and when the content (in this project, students, staff and parents) is relevant to the phenomenon (trust) and the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context, a case study design should be considered, according to Yin (2009, pp. 5–6). Further case study description is offered by Merriam (2009):

> Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expanded its readers’ experiences. These insights can be constructed as tentative hypotheses that help structure the research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing the field’s knowledge base (Merriam 2009, p. 51).

The proposition of this project, as described in Chapter One, is that trust in schools is an essential element. Developing from this proposal is the research design that investigates it and in particular, selects data collection types and methods that investigate what trust is and, how and why trust is developed at the school level. In accordance with the case study literature, sub-units are examined and then returned to the global case—the Vivaldi School.

After considering the literature on case study design in relation to the Vivaldi School, the methodological requirements of a case study provide a credible framework with which to work. The next section examines the fit and inclusion of ethnography.
3.2.3.2 Strategy: Ethnography

The tradition of ethnography is a well established research approach used originally by anthropologists. Ethnography is derived from the Greek word “ethnos”, meaning people, hence the ethnographer is the person who studies people. According to Patton (2002), ethnography is the “earliest distinct tradition of qualitative inquiry” (p. 81). This research method has evolved over the years and now is adopted by researchers across many disciplines of social science.

Situated within the case study, ethnographic techniques were applied to collect a thick source of data in a naturalistic setting. Reasons for adopting this approach within the case study are based on the methodological tradition of ethnography which supports an in-depth study, utilises the researcher as the primary data collector in a participant-observer role, and positions this project within an authentic setting suitable for the research inquiry. This approach foregrounds a reflexive frame that takes advantage of the well established relationship between the researcher and the participants, thus enabling authentic participation and reducing the time gap in data collection.

According to Van Maanen (1979), “a Principal aim of ethnography is to uncover and explicate the ways in which people in particular work settings account for, take action and otherwise manage their day to day situation” (p. 540). Creswell (2009) describes ethnography as one of the five strategies of qualitative research design “in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primary, observational data and interview data” (p. 229). Thomas (1993), describes ethnography as “the tradition of cultural description and analysis that displays meanings by interpreting meanings...describes what is” (p. 4).
The role of the ethnographer, or person conducting the ethnography, is central to this research method. According to Bryman (2008) it is:

like participant observation, a research method in which the researcher immerses him or herself in a social setting for an extended period of time, observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and with the fieldworker, and asking questions. However, the term [ethnographer] has a more inclusive sense than participant observation, which seems to emphasise the observational component. Also, the term “ethnography” is frequently used to refer to the written output of ethnographic research (p. 693).

Fetterman (2010, p. 1) explains that an ethnography is both a research method and a product: the former being the methodology and the latter usually being a written text. In this study, the researcher has adopted the methodology and the product in the form of three vignettes which are presented in Chapter Four (see 3.3.2.2 Grounded Theory).

There are two main ethnographic approaches: conventional and critical. These approaches are presented and applied to the project in an eclectic manner: neither solely one nor the other. Thomas (1993) states that:

critical ethnography is a style of analysis and discourse embedded within conventional ethnography. As a consequence critical ethnography and conventional ethnography share several fundamental characteristics. Among these are reliance on qualitative interpretation of data, core rules of methods and analysis, adherence to a symbolic interactionist paradigm, and a preference for developing Grounded Theory (1993, p. 3).
Considering the most appropriate ethnographic methodological stance that aligns with the research question and the researcher’s philosophical stance is difficult. A comparison according to Thomas (1993, pp. 3–5) follows. In terms of focus, the critical ethnographer describes what a culture is, as participants perceive it, and describes what it could be, whereas the conventional ethnographer describes what a culture is, as participants perceive it, from their perspective. The difference between the research purposes is that the critical ethnographer studies culture for the purpose of changing it and to aid emancipator goals with action toward realising alternative possibilities “...simultaneously hermeneutic and emancipatory”. By contrast, the conventional ethnographer’s focus for purpose is to study the culture to describe it. The critical ethnographer speaks on behalf of the participants “as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subject [participant’s]” voice, while the conventional ethnographer speaks of its research subjects [participants] usually to an audience of other researchers. According to Thomas, “critical ethnography is conventional critical ethnography with a political purpose” (p. 4). On the other hand, the conventional ethnographer does not necessarily have a political purpose. In relation to bias, the critical ethnographer celebrates researcher normative and political positions as a means of invoking social consciousness and other societal change, whereas, the conventional ethnographer realises the impossibility of research free from normative and other biases and tries to repress these. Finally, in this comparison, the research assumptions held by the two forms of ethnographic traditions are very different. In the critical ethnography, the researcher questions the status quo and participant’s meanings; tries to reveal how participants perceive the researcher. Failure to integrate descriptions of cultural parts into an analysis of what the whole raises, and the critical implications of the descriptions—subverts the researcher’s utility as a human tools of knowledge—because simply stating the cultural context is not sufficient for an understanding of the topic. The conventional ethnographer assumes the status quo (cultural norms that distribute power in
language use, social life); describes and does not question the meanings that participants give to language activity and artifacts; and seldom reveals how participants perceive the researcher or resist symbolic power. However, the conventional ethnographer approach restricts alternative meanings, then this may conceal deeper levels of social life, and may create misunderstanding and hinder action.

While the description above emphasises many differences between the two forms of ethnographer, they share some similarities with analysis and discourse, such as reliance on qualitative interpretative data, core rules of methods and analysis, adherence to a symbolic interactionist paradigm, and a preference for developing Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967). As Smyth (2000) states, there are critical elements that distinguish the two forms of ethnographies, some of which were described above by Thomas (1993).

Significantly, Smyth (2000, pp. 67–73) presents pertinent detail relating to the important role of critical ethnography in school research that recognises the role of emancipating school participants. Research stages one to five clearly convey the researcher’s research steps in planning and actioning a critical ethnography. While these align with this project’s philosophical lens, they are not strategically applied and consequently, this project is not an authentic critical ethnography. Rather, it has applied aspects of traditional and critical ethnography.

3.2.3.3 Participant-observer

The hallmark of data collection within the ethnography is the application of the participant-observer, immersed within the case study. This project situates the primary researcher as an authentic naturalised participant. No time is lost, no loss of spontaneity is manifested by the gap in cultural competence; as discussed in Chapter One, the researcher is culturally embedded within the Vivaldi School.
Participatory observation was originally developed by anthropologists in the 1800s to study diverse cultures and is associated primarily with ethnography. This method is now extensively used in sociology and education to learn about explicit and implicit aspects of culture. This method is characterised by someone from outside the culture joining the culture to observe and learn both explicit and tacit understandings of social interaction. Johnson and Christensen (2012, p. 209) describe a continuum of qualitative observations ranging from the participant through to the complete observer. It is also recognised that people within the culture can take on this participant-observer role in research at the same time. This is described as an insider; that is, someone from within the culture fully participating whilst researching. The other extreme is someone from outside who observes only. There are benefits and challenges with both extremes. With the full participation from an insider's point of view, the participant-observer already has access to the research site, has knowledge of the existing culture and has established relationships. On the other hand, however, preconceived views of the culture and relationships have an element of bias and these may influence the perceptions of the participant-observer. While access to people within the site and the quality of their conversations with existing members may be of a high level, they may not be told all the same things because of other people's preconceived notion of their involvement in the culture and their bias will prevent this too. Whereas, an outsider brings fresh eyes to the research site. However, time is used in developing relationships and learning the tacit culture and building trust amongst the members before deep disclosure is provided to the outside participant. This outsider also brings bias from their previous experience in other workplaces. Hence, in summary, all participant-observers hold bias. Through reflexivity, previously discussed, the researcher’s role in identifying their bias, in both cases described above, will assist in their clearer construction of reality as well as with the involvement and participation of those being observed.
Blaikie (2010, pp. 50–2) connects the researcher’s role with their philosophical stance, Blaikie maintaining that the researcher adopts a research “stance” towards the research process and participants relating the researcher and the researched. He presents a continuum of six stances: detached observer, empathetic observer, faithful reporter, mediator of languages, reflective partner and dialogic facilitator. The stance of detached observer, or the “scientific” approach, is claimed to separate out the researcher’s personal belief system that may impact on the objectivity of the research. He describes the researcher as an uninvolved spectator. Blaikie’s second research stance, empathetic observer, aims for objectivity while “grasping the subjective meaning” used by the researched (p. 51), referred to as verstehen. The stance of faithful reporter situates the researcher as immersed in the natural setting and Blaikie (2010) cites this as “naturalism”, from Denzin (1971), and Guba (1978, p. 51). This maintains the “integrity of the phenomenon”, citing Schutz’s idea of “postulate of adequacy”. Applied in this project, “member validation” of events to validate their accuracy is a key approach to ensure authenticity and prevent reframing from “distorting” the work being studied. The stance, of mediator of language interprets data and constructs meaning that reflects the researcher’s assumptions and life experiences involved. Blaikie (2010, p. 51) cites Geertz ’s view that researcher detached objectivity is impossible. The stance of reflective partner is committed to emancipation. Citing critical theory and Habermas, the researcher is a reflective partner and maintains conscious partiality. The dialogic facilitator is also mediator of languages: the researcher is another actor, with no recognition of “expert” skills.

This continuum moves from detachment from, to full involvement with, the participants. At a macro scale, these stances are crafted into the research design depending on the research paradigm. On a micro scale, through the researcher’s reflexive lens, this project
incorporated the following stances, depending on the situation: *faithful reporter, mediator of languages, reflective partner, conscious partiality, and dialogic facilitator*. The semi-structured interviews—discussed in the next chapter—primarily reflect the *faithful reporter*. However, outside of the interviews, and including member checking, the researcher primarily acted in a constructivist’s dialogic manner.

This summary reflects a continuum of researcher involvement: from full objective detachment to full participation and subjectivity. In this project, researcher involvement fluctuates primarily, at a macro level, between the third and the fifth stances. Smyth (2000, pp. 67–73) describes his five researcher’s research steps in planning and actioning a critical ethnography, which also fluctuate along continua, depending on the nature and stage of the life of the project.

### 3.2.3.4 Limitations of single case study and ethnography

Methodological authors widely recognise that single case and ethnography limitations are due to the contextual nature of the single case and ethnographic site (Merriam 2009; Yin 2003). The focus of these studies is often on an in-depth investigation of the way a particular group of people interact in their natural setting. Due to this localised analysis, critics argue that the findings are locally generated and hence difficult to generalise beyond the case. Concerns about validity and reliability of data collection that are used to generate result are examined in section 3.3.1.6 Validity.

Paradoxically, the closer the proximity in which the researcher works with the participants, the greater the challenge to reflect the participant’s point of view and not the researcher’s. This is due to the researcher being the primary investigator, data collector, and analyser. The need for physical proximity and recording the voices of the participants is met by the
researcher’s methodological approach that records the researcher’s reflexive and critical appraisal during the research process. Merriam (2009) states that the limitation to single case studies is the “sensitivity and integrity of the investigator” (p. 52).

Merriam (2009) identifies the challenges of single unit case studies around issues of generalisability: that is the learning from a particular case cannot be reliably transferred to another setting. However, Merriam qualifies this notion: “It is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can apply to his or her context...results, however, would be limited to describing the phenomenon rather than predicting future behaviour” (p. 51).

Despite some concerns with single case studies, Yin (2003, p. 4) presents vignettes of two famous single case studies: Street corner society (Whyte 1955)—a descriptive case study that discovers key phenomenon, and Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban missile crisis, (Graham 1971)—explanatory case study that discovers key phenomenon with “significant explanations and generalisation”. The international success of these single case studies validates the process as a credible research tool.

Rather than being contradictory paradigms, the positivist and constructionist perspectives correspond to two different epistemological commitments and both of them can contribute to a better understanding of trust and culture and its impacts on educational research. At the ontological level, cultures are not only real systems of beliefs and values, but are also products of joint social construction of the participant realities. At the methodological level, richness of constructivist research can enhance precision of positivistic research. While constructivist researches are rich in meaning, they are context-bound and don’t aim for generalisability. On the other hand, positivistic researches involve precision marked by causal relations and predictability. The thick description of trust and culture produced by
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Qualitative research can help define elements within social settings as well as frame hypotheses in quantitative research. In a similar way, precision and intelligible measures provided by quantitative approaches can lead to clarification of abstract and hard-to-study cultural concepts such as trust.

Choosing the research approach depends to a large extent on the way trust is theoreticalised. Hofstede (2001, p. 11) took a positivistic position, describing trust within an “onion diagram,” which defined the layers as symbols, heroes, and rituals of trust, with the core as values. He grouped the first three layers into the category of practices, as they are observable from the outside but can only be theoretically interpreted from the inside. In the same vein, Schein (2004; 2008; 2010; 2009) theoreticalised organisational trust in three existing and clear-cut layers as: artifacts (visible organisational structures and processes), espoused values (strategies, goals, philosophies); and basic underlying assumptions (unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings).

Within a cultural community, dividing trust into layers is useful in understanding trust’s complexity. The “external layer of onion” model proposed by Schein (2010) consists of artifacts which are visible, hard and relatively stable. This visible layer corresponds to a positivistic orientation which views trust within a culture as a real and stable structure. By contrast, the “internal layer of onion” model includes basic underlying assumptions such as perceptions, thoughts, and feelings which are essentially invisible and impossible to measure and be quantify. Therefore, this layer of trust can be related to a constructivist perspective which emphasises the importance of subjective interpretation in cultural studies. Hofstede (2001) and Schein (2010) are both known as researchers with positivistic positions and their definitions of culture are based rather on realist ontology, however,
their theoreticalisations of culture entail some degree of interpretation and social construction.

From a constructivist standpoint, trust studies provide a detail, thick, interpretive, and microscopic understanding of cultural trust phenomena: rich in meaning and incorporating historical and contextual elements to offer a holistic and practical vision. There is no intention for generalisability and predictability. However, this project recognises the body of research in a positivistic manner that aids the theoreticalisation of the topic of trust and within a phenomenon such as culture. It is theoreticalised at two levels: real and interpretive a real level of trust within a culture is related to systems and structures which are visible and can be measured. By contrast, the interpretive level is concerned with semiotic patterns and social constructions which are tacit and should be deciphered. As discussed earlier, the body of work already done on trust with a positivistic stance is valuable. However, the purpose of this study is to investigate, in a subjective and participatory way, how the socially complex nature of trust is exhibited and constructed and in a specific context—a primary school—so that a comprehensive understanding of a cultural trust phenomena is understood.

At this point, key content in relation to the interpretative paradigm and the strategies of inquiry work contained within the research design have been explored. The next section investigates the literature concerning methods of collecting and analysing materials.

### 3.3 Methods of collecting and analysing procedures: Phase Four

In this section, Phase Four of, the previously described methodological framework, as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2011a, pp. 12–5), is selected by the researcher for this project to answer the research questions. Figure three shows, in context, that the
methodological analysis for discussion in this section is centred on Phase Four: Methods of collecting and analysing materials. There are three stages in this Phase: Stage One, Data collection; Stage Two, Data analysis; and Stage Three, reflections and outcomes. The focus of this chapter is primarily on Stages One and Two. Stages Three will be examined more fully in Chapter Four.

In this section, aspects of the theoretical methodological design decisions for this project are presented in relation to the literature and them specifically how the methodology is implemented in the methods. There are three stages to this phase: Stage One, Data collection; Stage Two, Data analysis, and Stage Three, Reflections and outcomes. Specific detail about the processes of each stage is reserved for analysis in Chapter Three.
3.3.1 Stage One: Data collection

The focus of this stage, within the review of literature, involves making logical decisions about the most appropriate data collection method in relation to the theoretical frame constructivist frame and the multi-part research question. These are considered under the following headings: ethics, timeline, data source: sampling, interview processes, validation, triangulation and data report. This stage involved recording the understanding trust from the three stakeholder groups: students, parents, and staff, in the form of semi-structured interviews within the constructivist paradigm. However, before data collection could progress, ethical considerations and approvals are required.

3.3.1.1 Ethics

Australia has sound ethical standards and guidelines that apply to the conduct of research (Williams, Guenther & Arnott 2011, p. 1). The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (NHMRC) clearly states the responsibilities of the researcher and the rights of individuals and communities being researched. Universities ensure that research is conducted within the requirements. Charles Darwin University’s Human Research Ethics Committee Guidelines (CDU 2009) have clear requirements and all staff and students are directed to seek approval before commencing research. Further information on this process and specifics that relate to matters of confidentiality, informed consent, privacy, deception and accuracy, risk, respect for an individual’s dignity and integrity is discussed below. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has developed a set of 14 research ethic guidelines which provide a clear framework in which to design research. These include rights to full and fair participation in any processes, projects and activities that impact on them, and the right to control and maintain their culture and heritage. AIATSIS (2011) considers that these principles are not only a matter of ethical research practice but of human rights:
The *Guidelines* comprise 14 principles grouped under the broad categories of rights, respect and recognition; negotiation, consultation, agreement and mutual understanding; participation, collaboration and partnership; benefits, outcomes and giving back; managing research: use, storage and access; and reporting and compliance (pp. 5–16).

In accordance with Charles Darwin University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Guidelines (AIATSIS 2011; CDU 2009), this researchers applied for HREC approval and was given on 29 January 2007 for 12 months. A second year was applied for and granted for in December 2007 for 2008. Similarly, the Department of Education and Training (DET), formally Employment, Education and Training (DEET), requires researchers to apply for permission (DET 2011). This also took place and permission to research in a DET school was given on 21 December 2006 (see Appendix 1, Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics approval to conduct research; and Appendix 2, Department of Employment, Education and Training approval to conduct research). Both organisations required a report at the completion of this project.

All aspects of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans and Guidelines (NHMRC) for ethical research in Australian Indigenous Studies were implemented to ensure that the rights of individuals and communities being researched are respected and protected from inappropriate research decisions. The manner in which Indigenous participants are studied is also included in the CDU ethical approval process. All 14 aspects of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS 2011) research ethic guidelines are addressed before approval is considered. As a result of these understandings and accountability requirements, issues of participant
privacy, informed consent, data collection and storage and member validation were some of the key requirements fulfilled by this researcher.

Specifically, data storage security and anonymity is ensured by numbering the field notes, research journal and interviews (on digital recorder), and then storing data—both transcribed and digital—in a locked filing cabinet at the CDU researcher’s locked office. The list of names and corresponding numbers are stored separately from the hard copies of interviews. Pseudonyms are used to portray participants’ experiences and the school’s name is also a pseudonym. The computer containing downloaded digital interviews is password protected. In the longer term, the original hard copy data are securely stored in a locked filing cabinet at CDU in the researcher’s office for a period of five years on completion of the project. The data will then be destroyed using an industrial shredding company. At the end of the study the electronic files are transferred to an external hard drive and held securely with the hard copy files in the locked filing cabinet.

Should a participant withdraw consent, all information stored concerning that person will be returned to that person. This includes all digital audio recordings and interview transcripts. In the event of the death of a participant, all stored information concerning that person would be destroyed in the presence of a witness who will confirm with signature that all information relating to the participant has been destroyed. The signed statement will identify the witness and their occupation. This statement will be stored during the life of the project.

The HREC approved Consent Form and Information Sheet was used with all participants (see Appendix 7, Information sheet, consent form and interview schedule). The Information Sheet was given to the participant to keep, and contains contact details for the researcher
in case of an emergency and the HREC Secretariat in case of concerns or complaints.

Information allowing for the participant to withdraw from the project or not participate at all is included in the project’s HREC approved form and these details were also verbally explained to each participant. However, this did not happen, as no individuals withdrew from the interview or any aspect of the project.

Minimal risk is involved in this project. However, consent was obtained from all participants in such a manner as to avoid placing undue pressure on them to consent. The process of interview participation was explained in detail. Advice was sought from the Parent Reference Group and the Indigenous Reference Group on the most appropriate manner in which to conduct this process with regard to students. Signed parent consent was obtained prior to the interview. The parameters of the research project did not require the use of an interpreter in any cases. Documented consent was obtained using an appropriate Plain English Consent Form and a Plain Language Form that was approved by the CDU (see Appendix 7, Information sheet, consent form and interview schedule).

The interview process was semi-structured in the school environment familiar to the student. The researcher ensured that the emotional and psychological safety of minors was ensured. From the beginning of the interview, the researcher gave unequivocal assurance that individual withdrawal would not result in discrimination, or reduction in the level of education or relationship. Individuals were assured at the beginning of the interview that they may leave at any stage of the interview with no reprisals.

During the interview process, the researcher accessed the well-established positive relationships with all participants. The researcher’s interpersonal skills were employed to draw on familiar knowledge, supportive tone and content so that the student participants
felt comfortable and this helped them relax into a reflective semi-structured interview. Hence, identification of any anxiety was straightforward and immediately rectified by a smile or joke to ease initial nerves.

The school selected for the research site regularly discussed trust and what it means to individual behaviour as it is the view of the Principal that a clearer understanding of individual trust helps develop a collective and shared trust that may be described, as a result of this project. Participants, in particular minors, did not find the semi-structured interview unrelated to normal adult/child conversations. Further, the school’s ethos is that individual wellbeing is enhanced when trusting relations are fostered. Hence, the more students discuss issues around trust and relations, the better their wellbeing.

The study was designed to record the voices of core stakeholders of the school. Students, parents, and staff self-identified their interest to participate in the interview. Minimum risk management was required with the three cohorts as the choice to participate was entirely up to individuals. Given that the researcher is well known to participants, research ethical guidelines ensured confidentiality and anonymity to all individuals and provided assurance to them that all data collected was bound by ethical guidelines and this also helped participants feel safe. Self-selection also allowed members of the school community, who may not feel comfortable with the researcher, for any reason, the choice not to nominate and hence reduce any conflict that may threaten the individual’s dignity or the reputation of the project. Members of the school community, whether student, staff or parent, were invited to participate and at no stage was anyone compelled to contribute. This process in itself provided a vehicle for hazard prevention. Parents made the choice to endorse their child’s participation or not. The researcher, as participant-observer, used a reflexive lens to design, research, analyse, and report findings with particular sensitivity to the age
vulnerability of students and the autobiographical nature of the participant-researcher (see section 1.5 Limitations of the current study). The researcher has a deep understanding of individual students and used this to minimise interview anxiety and reassure confidentiality.

Current approaches and recommendations concerning the participation of, or impact upon, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is implemented as summarised below. Two reference groups oversee the project at the school: The School Reference Group (SRG) which is made up of School Council members and a University researcher, and the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) made up of the Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker, parents and a researcher. The researcher endeavoured to ensure respect for the cultural, social, and religious beliefs and customs or cultural heritage of the participants at all times during the processes involved.

The researcher ensured that the following values—based on the 14 Australian Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Studies, principles (AIATSIS 2011)—are considered and addressed in the research methodology by:

1. *Respecting, negotiating* and acknowledging individual’s (Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker (AIEW) and participants and group’s (Parent School Partnerships Initiative (P SPI) and family groups’ contribution. Listening to and *consulting* with the IRG group for advice and feedback on the research method and other things as they arose to establish and maintain *agreement and mutual understanding*. Encouraging individuals to speak up either directly through the AIEW to express their interests and aspirations. Ensuring that the affirmation of rights, different values, norms, and aspirations are respected and valued by the researcher.
Continuing to encourage cultural activities at school/research site that demonstrate a genuine desire to value Indigenous students and their families.

2. Acknowledging all *partners are equal*, regardless that they may be different through formal and informal contact with the IRG, AIEW and the wider Indigenous community. The researcher’s body language consistently reflected equality and appreciation of collective Indigenous memory and shared experience as a resource and inheritance.

3. *Managing the research responsibility*, ensuring no harm to individuals or communities, or to those things that they value. Also establishing processes to guarantee researcher accountability to individuals and communities, particularly with *respect* to cultural and social dimensions of community life.

4. Protecting against assimilation, integration, and/or subjugation of values during semi-structured interviews and informal and semi-formal interviews with the AIEW, IRG and individual Indigenous members of the research site.

5. Demonstrating the *spirit and integrity* of credibility in intent and process through informal conversations and semi-formal meetings. Ensuring that accurate recording of semi-structured interviews are reflective of the individual by revising the interview with individuals to enable a true and rich record that reflects integrity of cultural inheritance.

6. Inviting key members of the research site to a face to face meeting to *collaborate* and determine how to best to seek consent from the Indigenous cohort and how best to disseminate completed research.

7. Ensuring honest *ongoing two-way communication* that allowed sufficient time for a genuine partnership to develop and explaining the process to ensure confidentiality and the potential risks and benefits of the project.
8. Being aware of the value of Indigenous perspectives and their contribution to the project.

9. Recognising that the project site comprises of a wide range of Indigenous individuals and that the view of individuals may not represent the collective view.

10. Ensuring appropriate recognition of intellectual and cultural property.

11. Sharing findings with the participants and community representatives that enhanced relationships between school and home resulting in better learning outcomes.

Key features of the overriding research methodology made sure participants were included in mutual benefits, and are individually and collectively treated with respect. The right for individuals to have different values and aspirations was an important component of this project to break down any stereotyping. Further, individuals and the collective have a right to enjoy cultural distinctness that may be an integral component of cultural inheritance.

The School’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Worker (AIEW) is the key person at the research site who regular links with Indigenous families and members. The Parent School Partnerships Initiative (PSPI), is also an important link between mainstream school culture and Vivaldi School Indigenous families and the wider Indigenous community. The researcher met with the AIEW and some members of the PSPI. As a result, the researcher has a deeper understanding of the Indigenous cohort and recognises that the Indigenous participants are owners of traditional knowledge. As a result, the consent information sheet and form stated, “I understand that the ownership of Aboriginal knowledge and cultural heritage is retained by the informant and this will be acknowledged in research findings and in the dissemination of the research” (see Appendix 7, Information sheet, consent form and interview schedule).
Permission was granted in writing, using the approved HREC consent form or by verbal permission. Verbal permission was collected by the AIEW or the researcher. The choice was entirely up to the Indigenous parents and either choice was respected. The parents who chose to give verbal consent through the AIEW were informed by the AIEW that the researcher honoured the above consent statement regarding the consent information sheet and form.

To summarise, all ethical considerations reflected in CDU HREC, AIATSIS, DET and national and international ethical standards were maintained throughout the project which demonstrated duty of care in ensuring that the welfare and rights of every participant in this research were protected. Parental permission from primary school student participants was arranged. Consideration to privacy, confidentiality, and avoidance of harm was applied in the beginning, during, and at the end of the research. Data storage is also in accordance with the guidelines.

3.3.1.2 Timeline

The timeline was constructed from the outset of the research project and was a key organisational driver. Data were collected from the research site between February 2007 and December 2008. During that time the researcher had full access to the participants in their natural setting. Sixty-seven interviews were conducted during these school years (three transcripts were accidently deleted, two failed to record and two interviews were excluded as they lacked sufficient detail), leaving sixty suitable interviews for transcribing and analysis. Interview times were negotiated to suit the participants’ availability. Further details about the interview process are described below and a data report is included in Chapter Four.
3.3.1.3 Data sources: Sampling

The decision around sampling methods is based on the research literature. Fetterman (2010, pp. 35–6) states that the research question shapes the choice of data collection, arguing that the people to be studied and the selection of the research site need to be considerable to ensure credible research. Even if it were possible, it is not necessary to collect data from everyone in a community in order to get valid findings. In qualitative research, only a sample (that is, a subset) of a population is selected for any given study. The study’s research objectives and the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity) determine which and how many people to select.

A second requirement, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), is the creation of a sampling frame which is relevant to the theoretical frame that supports analytical generalisations. In this case, the sampling is theory-driven, as in Grounded Theory (see section 3.3.2.2 Grounded Theory). As a result, the researcher selected opportunities to build theory as argued by Miles and Huberman; to put “flesh on the bones of general constructs and their relationships” (p. 27).

Purposive sampling aims to collect data from participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question. Sample sizes, which may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, depend on the resources and time available, as well as the study’s objectives. Purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to the research questions) while “yet small enough to conduct a deep, case-orientated analysis” (Johnson & Christensen 2012, p. 239). Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection as discussed in the previous Grounded Theory section.
Fetterman’s (2010) detailed *Ethnography: Step-by-step* provides convincing methods to researchers, particularly those new to ethnography. He advises selecting a target population then applying a process of elimination deciding who will be eliminated prior to filtering out “those sources of information that will add little to the study” (p. 35). Fetterman describes an informal big-net approach, that is, “conducive to participant observation” as an initial selection process (p. 35). This method is often used by ethnographers as it gives a broad overview of the participants before targeting a more microscopic view. It also is inclusive of the participatory members and an invitation to all members gives them an opportunity to express an interest in participating or not. As the study refines the researcher selects the most suitable members judged on the researches’ knowledge of the early interviews and growing knowledge of the at the research site members. Fetterman also employs judgemental sampling that relies on the researcher’s judgement to select the most suitable member to provide information about the research question. Johnson and Christensen (2012) refer to judgement sampling as purposive sampling with the “researcher specifies the characteristics of the population of interest and then tried to locate individuals who have those characteristics” (p. 231). They claim that any nonrandom sampling method from a sample means it is difficult to generalise. However, the purpose of this study is to understand phenomena, in context, that is created at this case study site within the constructivist paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (2005b) say that “qualitative researchers employ theoretical sampling, and not random, sampling models”, (p. 378). Charmaz (2011) describes theoretical sampling as “aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness” (p. 374). Theoretical sampling, according to Charmaz (2006) seeks and collects “pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in your emerging theory” (p. 96).
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

In line with the explicated methodology above, and in accordance with the theoretical constructivist paradigm, the primary data source was face to face semi-structured interviews. In order to find willing interview participants, the process initially involved publicizing the research process to the whole school community and inviting members to participate by applying Fetterman’s (2010, p. 35) “big-net” approach. This meant that everyone was invited and individuals made the decision to participate or not to participate. This method was successful in attracting volunteers. These initial stages of participant recruitment, Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009) advise researchers about managing power relations at various stages of the research, recognising that participants need to hear the reassurance about ethical confidentiality, but also see this played-out in pre and post interview behaviour to ensure emotional safety. Karnieli-Miller et al. see this initial stage as important: the “amount and quality of the information offered regarding the research...has the potential to change the power relations between the two, giving participants’ greater power and more information” (p. 282) (see 3.3.3.1 Power Relations).

Another sampling method was employed to find participants that the researcher had heard talking about aspects of the research questions and thought would make a valuable contribution to the study. This was implemented as the data collection process progressed and the researcher applied judgemental or purposive sampling.

Data collection methods are summarised through the following four processes:

- Formal meetings with the three stakeholder groups informing them of the project and following this, an invitation was extended to the three stakeholder groups to participate in a semi-structured interview via the school newsletter and School Council
- Meetings with SCRG and IRG
- Small informal focus group discussions were conducted with the participants in separate groups
• Individual interviews with specific participants that were considered to be representative of the Case Study site population.

During the analysis phase (see 3.3.2 Stage Two: Data analysis), focus groups were asked to comment on the emerging themes, within the context of the research site. In addition to this, research peer presentations also took place in a number of other settings to “test” the emerging themes and results. This also provided feedback from experienced researchers about possible inclusion of additional analytical tools and additional reflexivity considerations.

A total of sixty-seven members of the research site participated in semi-structured interviews (20 students—17 remaining, 22 staff and 25 parents—21 remaining). The interview protocol is discussed in the following pages. Approximately seventy-five per cent of members self-selected for interview participation.

3.3.1.4 Interview process

Given the School’s philosophy of inclusion, the researcher implemented an open and transparent communication strategy about the project to encourage interest and a willingness to participate. All members of the school knew what was happening and anyone who wanted to participate in the interviews could. Communication about the project was distributed to all school parents via the weekly School newsletter. Parents were invited to contact the School’s front office for an appointment with the researcher who was available in the mornings and most afternoons in the playground for easy access. The informal and approachable availability helped facilitate questions and interview leads as time progressed. In line with other School based research conducted in the school previously, students received a letter from the Principal and the researcher explaining the research project, including approvals, and attached permission for participation that required parent

143
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Approval. Similar information was reiterated in a School newsletter article about the project and invited parents to approve their child’s to participation in a semi-structured research interview about trust in the school.

The researcher had to proceed carefully within the “research zone” to ensure a balance between transparent communications about the research process was required to set people at ease, and make processes explicit while maintaining ethical compliance with participant privacy. Ethical guidelines are made public to minimise any anxieties. Parents, students and staff were encouraged to participate in interviews but it was also essential that the researcher did not compel people to participate. The sampling strategies were selected in accordance with ethnography and Grounded Theory methods (see 3.3.1.3 Data sources: Sampling). Conversations about the research methodological procedures were largely managed through the formal communication strategy. This left conversation about the topic of trust in the formal semi structured interview and professional conversations about trust...The researcher was careful to compartmentalise or silo the research interview information. This allowed participants to speak freely in a confidential interview within the “researcher” construct. This silo was maintained to support a feeling of safety about and trust in the researcher’s confidentiality and credibility as a researcher—showing that the privileged information given during the interview was respected and not used for other means. When processes of member checking and additional information requiring the participant’s time was negotiated as “research business” outside of work business. This maintained the silo approach and participants felt that they could go about their daily school business without the unexpected pressure of being asked about the project.

Students in the senior part of the school were purposely selected due to their relative maturity. Students in Years Five, Six, and Seven were selected and their ages ranged from
10 to 12 years old. As a group, these students have comparatively more experience in the Primary School, life experience, and generally they have a more extensive vocabulary to articulate their thoughts on trust than the younger children have. Being conscious of not placing undue pressure on the children, these interviews were fairly short—between five and ten minutes. From the outset of the individual interviews, the children appeared relaxed and willing to answer questions and enjoyed the experience. Saturation of the content was achieved quickly. Lengthy elaborations are not necessarily required in this primary school context as the children’s concepts were repeated. This was determined when new data no longer brought additional insights to the research questions. It was previously decided to interview about twenty children. Two interviews lacked detail and three of interviews were accidently deleted from the digital recorder.

Following parent informed consent, the student interviews were conducted during school hours in a small office space adjacent to their classrooms. The room was private and familiar to the students, parents and staff. School artifacts were used during the interview to bring familiar concrete examples of charts used by the School in the hope that they would scaffold conversation, and they did. There were the “Tribes—a new way of learning together” agreements chart (the agreements are attentive listening, appreciation/no put downs, mutual respect, and the right to pass) (Gibbs & Bennett 1994), the School Hand with values and school motto, “personal best” (see Appendix 3) and a Y chart showing “feels like, sounds like, looks like” (see Appendix 4). Following the interview and transcribing the aural text into a written form, students were asked to comment on the interview. They showed little interest in this as they viewed this step as unnecessary and made no changes.
In line with data sampling techniques, staff volunteered for the semi-structured interview. Negotiation of the interview time and place was done on an individual basis. Most staff chose to meet in a private office located by a long corridor away from other rooms and is a private setting. Saturation of data in relation to the research questions was achieved. Staff interviews were more staggered than those of the students as they were longer and it was more difficult to negotiate a suitable and convenient time. These interviews took place approximately once every fortnight over the 2007 year. Initially five staff expressed an interest in the interview and, as they spoke to others about their experience, some of these others later volunteered. As issues and perspectives were raised, staff who had already been interviewed were asked to clarify these points. This was a form of triangulation discussed in section 3.3.1.7 Triangulation.

Staff interviews varied in length from twenty minutes to forty-five minutes. The semi-structured interview asked participants to describe and explain aspects of trust in the school and their private lives. On reflection, due to the already established relationship between the researcher and the staff member, the need to describe every comment in fine detail was not required as this experience was not seen as a “one off”. The participant and the researcher have rapport and shared experiences. These helped facilitate comprehension of their experiences quickly. For example, the participant need only to say the words “the Hand” and immediately a joint understanding of the history and current status of the Hand is known by both. Lengthy elaborations are not required. Thus, in a short space of time, a deep understanding of the participant’s point of view was established.

Member checking or participant feedback was applied to verify participant and researcher’s interpretations (Johnson & Christensen 2012, p. 266). Participants were provided a copy of their transcribed interview; only one participant made changes and added further detail to their data.
School Council parent members were the first to agree to be interviewed and this was due to the fact that they heard about the project first hand in their meeting. Other parents responded to the request via the newsletter and contacted the researcher directly to negotiate an interview. These interviews were conducted over 2007 with half of them collected during October. These interviews were also conducted outside of school hours. An indication that parents felt that they could speak honestly during the interview was when two parents disclosed an example of previous reduced trust in the school. Efforts were made by the researcher to create an interview environment that was conducive to honest communication. These two disclosures indicated to the researcher that these parents felt that there would be no reprisals arising from the interview. The fact that others did not disclose disappointment with the school is one for consideration. However, the participants may have come forward because they valued the school and had no negative thoughts to express. Parents who were not happy would have left the school or chosen not to participate in the project. It is worth noting that the research questions are primarily on trust and how it is constructed. As a consequence of Grounded Theory methods, a third aspect of the project developed: What is distrust in a school setting? If the intent had been to study this from the outset, a different methodological framework may have been developed that collected confidential data from parents about the school and distrust. Further to this, it is worth noting that the School collects quantitative and qualitative data every year in the form of a perception survey. Over many years, data demonstrates that there are more positives expressed than negatives.

In order to accurately record the participant’s voice, a digital audio-recorder was used to collect the data which was then transcribed into written form. Following the interview, the researcher listened to the digital audio recording and reflected on the semi-structured
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Interview. On occasions, the researcher asked participants for more clarification on a topic or a point of view, then the research transcribed the digital audio recording and gave it to the participant with the understanding that more information or changes were welcome. Participants were provided with a printed copy of their interview and invited to make any changes, and confirm their interview. With the digital recorder failing twice which resulted in the loss of data, it was decided to use two digital-recorders: one was the primary recorder, the other a backup.

Consenting participants came to the negotiated interview venue at the prearranged appointment time with the mindset of talking about trust and how trust affects them at the research site. It was explained to each individual participant that they may choose to stop the interview and were free to stop participating at any stage before, during or after the semi-structured interview. From the outset participants were informed that they would have an opportunity to read the transcript and make modifications or include additional information, as they wished.

These semi-structured interviews took place in a relaxed private office of the researcher, the school’s conference room, or a private office space off campus in the local shopping centre. Participants were given the option to choose the most suitable venue to suit their needs. It was considered by the researcher that the participant should have the freedom to choose where they talked and issues such as privacy, convenience, and a quiet uninterrupted environment were some of the points raised by participants that informed their choice. The parent interviews varied from 15 minutes to 55 minutes. The majority of interviews took 30 minutes.
As the researcher had already established a working relationship with all participants, it was easy to begin the semi-structured interviews and quickly get to the core of their views. The researcher took minimal notes during the interview. However, face-to-face with eye contact and matching body language were used to assist the participant to feel at ease, relaxed and non-judged by the researcher. These methods were employed to facilitate a conducive rapport to “hear the voice” of the participant.

Guiding questions employed with adults in the semi-structured interviews are listed below in Figure 4 Semi-structured interview questions for adults. Questions were prepared in advance and applied in the interviews as a framework to elicit responses from the participants in relation to the first two research questions “What is trust? and How is trust constructed?” Thus the interview was semi-structured and provided opportunities for the participants to speak freely on topics relating to the inquiry. However, depending on the participant’s interest and relationship with the researcher, and prior conversations about the research questions, these listed questions were uses as a guide to elicit responses from the participant’s point of view.
1. Tell me about what you understand by the word “trust”?
   a. What do you mean by it?
   b. What does trust look like?
   c. What does trust sound like?
   d. What does trust feel like in a school?
   e. Can you tell me some stories about when trust was important to you in this school?

2. How do you think a trustworthy school environment is encouraged?
   a. To build a trustworthy school environment, what are the preconditions for students, teachers, and parents?
   b. What about the Hand?
   c. What about the Tribes agreements?
   d. What about the staff agreement?
   e. What are the outcomes of a trusting school environment?
   f. Stories to illustrate?

3. How do the various people in positions of authority at school influence a trusting environment?
   a. Does the school Principal influence trust?
   b. What role do students play?
   c. Parents?
   d. DET and policy?
   e. Who else is involved?
   f. Stories to illustrate?

**Figure 4 Semi-structured interview questions for adults**

In relation to interviewing children, the above semi-structured interview questions were modified to bring forth responses that the researcher identified as emerging themes and provided a positive interview experience for the child. Guiding questions employed with the individual children are listed below (Figure 5).
1. Are there kids in the school that you trust?
2. How do you know you trust them?
3. What is trust then?
4. Have you always trusted those kids?
5. Are there some kids that you don’t trust? Tell me why not?
6. Are there adults in the school that you trust? Why do you trust them?
7. Can the school help kids trust each other? Tell me about that.
8. What can teachers do to help kids trust each other? Can the Principal or Assistant Principal help?
9. Have you had an experience where you have not felt safe at school? Is that about trust or distrust?
10. Any more stories to tell me?

Figure 5 Semi-structured interview questions for children

In some interviews with students, it was difficult for students to express their thoughts, particularly on the abstract nature of trust so the “what if...” scenario about trust was used to elicit their reactions. For example, “If your best friend broke your trust, what would you do? Has this happened to you? Tell me about it.”

In conclusion, the research paradigm employs a constructionist stance. Emphasis is on co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and the participants. This is carefully staged with research methods which are designed to collect data from the participants in the early stages of the project. Grounded Theory methods are simultaneously used to identify core themes and emerging theory. The researcher’s reflexivity and research journal assisted with determining the fine role balance throughout the life of the project. Aspects of the researcher’s network relationships within the research site—friendship, role responsibilities and obligations, and the researcher’s role—have been reflected on. A method of compartmentalising “research talk” and “school talk” in this early collection phase was employed. This meant that the researcher made these distinctions explicit to the participants, particularly during interviews. Disclosure of sensitive material was offered by
all cohort groups during the “research talk” that had not been disclosed before in the “school talk” role.

3.3.1.5 Data report

The number of participants that “self-selected” for interview during the big-net sampling technique (Fetterman 2010) and theoretical sampling (Charmaz 2006) are listed below (see Table 1 Data report). Failure of the voice recorder, on two occasions, accidental deletion of three digital data files prior to transcribing and the exclusion of two interviews that lacked sufficient detail, led to a reduced number of interviews being transcribed than originally planned: sixty-seven interviewed and sixty selected. However, the breadth and depth of the sixty participants provided a satisfactory sample to identify recurring themes and refined categories in the emerging Grounded Theory.

Table 1 Data report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study participants</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants interviewed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of interviewed participants included in NVivo analysis</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of interviewed participants included in NVivo analysis</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One Indigenous adult and one Indigenous child were interviewed. Of the twenty student interviewed, one interview digital audio recording was accidently deleted, prior to transcribing and two interviews lacked sufficient detail. One of the deleted interviews was of an Indigenous student. This left one remaining Indigenous person participating in the study. A few adult Indigenous members consented to the interview. However, only one Indigenous person was able to attend and as a result, only one Indigenous participant was included. This low participation rate accurately reflects the staff cohort at the time of data gathering. Students in the targeted age range of 10–12 years of age is significantly low—a
possible 15 percent of students were available yet chose (or their parents) not to participate. The parent cohort had potentially 15 percent who could participate but chose not to.

3.3.1.6 Validity

Extensive literature regarding validity in qualitative research methodology has been considered. Key influences of this project design include Denzin and Lincoln (2011a), Guba and Lincoln (2005), Johnson and Christensen (2012) and Merriam (2009). Merriam (2009) recommends four methods to ensure consistency and dependability or reliability of qualitative research: triangulation, peer examination, investigator’s position and an audit trail (p. 222). These core strategies are adopted to furnish this credible project and are described below.

Firstly, triangulation, as it is applied here, looks for convergence and corroboration of the data. This is achieved by employing member checking, participant feedback, dissemination of results, and publication. Merriam (2009) recommends “the use of multiple methods of collecting data (methods triangulation), for example, can be seen as a strategy for obtaining consistent and dependable data”, as well as staff or that are most congruent with reality as understood by the participants (p. 222). Johnson and Christensen argue that, “triangulation can substantially increase the credibility or trustworthiness of a research finding” (p. 439).

Secondly, peer examination is applied to a range of macro and micro stages of the project to ensure validity or as Mirriam (2009) says, “dependability” or “consistency” as coined by Lincoln and Guba in (1985): determining if the results are “consistent with the data collected” (p. 220). At the micro level, member checking and triangulation achieves these criteria as well as data summaries to small groups of participants and PhD supervisors. At
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

the macro level, peer, participant presentations, and PhD supervisor presentations provide avenues to critically view. This macro level also provides avenues for colleagues researching trust, yet outside the research site, to concur or question the data and methodology (Robinson 2010).

Thirdly, the investigator’s position have been presented earlier and include ethical behaviour that relies on the researcher’s inquiry design, grounded in qualitative practices, and their professional trustworthiness and authenticity to give their work utmost credibility. Reflexivity is also a key theoretical framework that drives this researcher’s behaviour via reflective analysis against an internal ethical frame (see 3.3.3.2 Reflexivity). Merriam reminds researchers that the primary investigator, instrument of data collection and analysis, is pivotal to the “sensitivity and integrity of the investigator” (p. 52). These processes recognise that human behaviour is dynamic and the researcher’s role in qualitative research is to collect reliable data. Dependable data is not synonymous with the quantity of recoded experiences (p. 220). Rather, it is the positiononality of the researcher that recognises that quality of the experienced phenomenon is what is of interest.

Interpretive validity, as described by Johnson and Christensen (2012) refers to the degree to which to researcher understands the participants “inner worlds” and the “degree of accuracy in presenting these inner worlds” (pp. 265–6). In other words, interpretive validity refers to the researcher’s ability to “get inside the heads of the participants” provides the (p. 266). These processes are supported by the researcher’s established relationships with the participants and employment of these other described methods such as participant feedback. Participant feedback, or member checking, is to verify the researcher’s interpretations and conclusions with the participants (Johnson & Christensen 2012, p. 266). These details are expanded below in section 3.3.1.7 Triangulation.
The researcher’s audit trail and journal are avenues for record of all stages of the project, critical analysis of issues, and record of peer conversations as they arise. Merriam’s (2009) audit trail advice is endorsed in the project. She states that, “just as an auditor authenticates the account of a business, independent readers can authenticate the findings of the study by following the trial of the researcher” (p. 223). This final process provides a paper trail of events and a useful reference point as needed.

3.3.1.7 Triangulation

The integrated nature of this triangulation is not limited to Stage One: Data collection of the project. Aspects of triangulation are applied in the Stage Two: Data analysis and Stage Three: Reflections and outcomes of the project. Miles and Huberman (1994) express Triangulation as “a way to get to the finding in the first place—by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it from different sources by using different methods and by squaring the finding with others it needs to be squared with” (p. 267). It is easy to understand why triangulation has been strongly recommended in textbooks on case study research methods. In systematic combining, the emphasis on verification—that is, checking the accuracy of data—is not the main issue. Rather, multiple sources may contribute to revealing aspects unknown to the researcher, such as discovering new dimensions of the research problem. Most data collecting activities are directed towards the search for specific data in line with the current framework. These activities need to be complemented by efforts aiming at discovery. This may result in redirection of the study.
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Triangulation is sometimes selected as a justifiable method to ascertain reliability and validity of the collected interview data. Johnson and Christensen (2012) state that:

triangulation is the term given when the researcher seeks convergence, corroboration, of results from different research methods studying the same phenomenon. When you want to make a statement with confidence, you want your piece of evidence to lead to the same conclusion or inference.

Triangulation can substantially increase the credibility or trustworthiness of a research finding (p. 439).

Heck (2011) confirms the above definition of triangulation by stating that it “is the process of obtaining information from several different sources, cross-checking, and verifying sources of information” (p. 207). This method gives the researcher a three way check to ensure that what the interviewee said was also observed and seen by others. This data included interviews, member and informant checking, and direct observation. Heck (2011) identifies this as a central source of information and an “important part of the empirical process of triangulation being what people say and do (as in interviews) and what they actually say (as in observations of their behaviour)” (pp. 207–208). Discrepancies between what participants do and what they say they do, their “espoused theory” versus “theory in use”, is uncovered through multiple empirical observations and triangulation (see Argyris 1990 for information about theory-in-use). Heck claims that “it becomes possible to get an assessment of the reliability of their observations.” Thus, this process aided in ascertaining the quality and authenticity of the data.

Triangulation is a strategy that assists in minimising the researcher’s bias and is applied through the process of member checking. Johnson and Christensen (2012) advise that the process of member checking or participant feedback is “the most important process” to
ascertain the reliability of the data (p. 266). This practice involved taking the data and interpretations back to the participants and checking that the interview transcript, observations and results were plausible (Heck 2011, p. 207). In this project, participants, who were also informants, are asked to validate claims made by some interviewees and comment on their behaviour to further check the researcher’s perceptions in context to the research site. This process of member checking was adopted as a process in research triangulation. According to Flick (2009), triangulation is a strategy for “promoting quality of qualitative research” (p. 444). Flick argues that triangulation is a valuable method that can be applied to case studies or integrated into Grounded Theory or used in an ethnographic approach. A contemporary construction of triangulation is posited by Denzin and Lincoln (2011a):

viewed as a crystalline form, as a montage, or as a creative performance around a central theme, triangulation as a form of, or alternative to, validity thus can be extended. Triangulation is the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously (p. 5).

Creswell (1998) describes triangulation “researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, in theory to provide corroborating evidence” (p. 202). The importance of communication with members of the field, as a vital tool of qualitative researchers, for example, to verify data, is identified by Flick (2009) “as an explicit part of knowledge instead of deeming it as intervening variable” (p. 16). It is through the multiple networks that continually collect and verify data that ascertain a valid and detailed understanding of the phenomenon, from an interpretive-constructivist perspective (Merriam 2009, p. 216).
The process of data corroboration ensures that agreement about the data is reached (Johnson & Christensen 2012, p. 266). Both are demonstrated in this project by multiple data sources and multiple research methods to study the phenomena. While there was only one researcher involved in this project, it could be argued that the informants acted as “quasi” researchers that confirmed or rejected evidence provided. Fetterman (2010) asserts “no one can be completely sure about the validity of research conclusions, but the ethnographer needs to gather up sufficient and sufficiently accurate data to feel confident about research findings and to convince others of their accuracy” (p. 9). To assist, he recommends that the ethnographer utilises an emic understanding [one that comes from a person within the culture] of the context and participants of the research site to ensure the “validity and usefulness of the data” (p. 22). An emic ethnographic approach that collaboratively utilises key informants to construct meaning making together also enhances the validity of the effort or finished product (p. 82). Validity is further enhanced by triangulation that involves “testing one source of information against another to strip away alternative explanation in an attempt to prove a hypothesis” (p. 94). This involves comparing information sources to test the quality of information and then considering the whole circumstances in perspective.

3.3.1.8 Conclusion of Stage One: Data collection

In conclusion of Stage One, Data collection, this project is positioned on ethical behaviour that relies on the researcher’s inquiry design, grounded in qualitative practices, and their professional trustworthiness and authenticity to give their work utmost credibility. Reflexivity is a key theoretical framework that drives this researcher’s behaviour via reflective analysis against an internal ethical frame.
3.3.2 Stage Two: Data analysis

Through the literature, the data analysis stage establishes the decisions made in relation to data analysis of Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory, and Membership Category Analysis. All aspects of the methodological literature in relation to each stage of data analysis are considered. In light of this, Johnson and Christensen (2004) claim that “good researchers carefully examine any negative evidence that operates against their beliefs, research conclusions, and theoretical explanations” (p. 19).

This section explains the methods of data analysis: Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory, and Membership Analysis (see Figure 3 Stages 1 and 2 within Phase Four of the research design). Stage Two operationalised the methodological theory, as described in Chapter Two (see section 3.3.2 Stage Two: Data analysis). Each of the three analysis Steps—Step 1: Thematic Analysis, Step 2: Grounded Theory, and Step 3: Membership Category Analysis—are described below.

3.3.2.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is an extracting process that codes and categorises data. Saldaña (2009) says that themes are an “outcome of coding” (p. 13). This view is implied by other scholars that refer to the themes as they emerge from the data (Creswell 2009; Saldaña 2009; Silverman 2006). An inductive process, that disaggregates the text, assembles the text with codes and themes are identified by the researcher. Developing themes can be a challenging process and Miles and Huberman (1994) highlight the importance of the natural setting, saying that the “contextual information...tells us why and how the code would appear significant” (p. 87).
NVivo 8 software database (produced by QSR International) is used to manage the collected project data. It is designed for the import, sorting, and analysis of manuscripts as Word, PDF, and other types of files including digital photos and audio and video files for qualitative analysis. This project did not include audio and video files. NVivo 8 has the facility to search text and word frequency as well as coding queries that can be collected into Nodes, an NVivo term designated as a collection point for searches, much like a folder. The searches in these nodes can be linked together into relationships. Code queries and matrices are database facilities used to sort through coded data to find relationships and their frequency. The NVivo processes were adopted from Bazeley (2007).

The analysis was carried out using the data and is explained here in three logical steps: (a) Initial coded categories, (b) Condensed themes, and (c) Deconstruction. Concerning (a) Initial coded categories, this was based on the early themes identified from the participant’s semi-structured interviews. The transcribed interviews were entered into the NVivo 8 qualitative research software. Each individual interview transcript was stored as an internal interview data source. The categories were manually coded line by line as described by Charmaz (2006, pp. 49–50). This approach helped the researcher to “remain open to the data” and be able to identify implicit and explicit nuances in the data (p. 17). Thus, all initial coding categories were developed from the data. Electronic coding stripes were applied to each individual interview transcript for easy reference and consideration during the merging of themes. The evolving categories were cross-linked and electronically stored as nodes. The researcher can access both the coded interview stripes and or the coded nodes grouped in the initial coded categories: codes within the interview were situated, codes as nodes are thematically recorded.
The second converging of the data is required to further condense the emerging themes in the Step identified as (b) Condensed themes. This additional process resulted in a workable thematic structure of all the collected data. These condensed categories are more coherent than the initial themes and consequently inform the early stages of answering the research questions. Charmaz (2006) describes this as a consistent comparative method “that generates successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with category, category with category, and category with concept” (p. 187). Thus, a number of analyses took place to refine patterns from the original thematic process. The themes-merging process helped identify the actions and behaviour that support participants to construct such a trusting school environment. This process of condensing and merging continued until a coherent core set of themes were constructed from the data. Each step involved participant checking and clarification to confirm the merging of like categories into a theme node. Decisions were made based on a deep understanding of the views presented by participants during the semi-structured interviews and through day to day interaction with case study members over the two year data collection period. This reflexive and emic or insider’s perspective of reality was applied to the process of merging like categories into a theme node. Conversations with key informants helped to clarify understandings and evidence around the research question and these informed the cognitive process of merging categories into themes.

During this converging process, the NVivo facility which allows each individual node to sort and sift through all other categories, and to exclude them if they do not “belong” to that node, was used. All comments relating to the node were viewed, read, and organised into a separate word document. This facility was applied to developing emergent nodes when clarification and validation is required from the participants. At strategic intervals the node descriptive data are printed and read through by key informants to establish the
authenticity of the themes. The informants also confirmed or rejected the placing of minor nodes into larger nodes, as a way of merging and condensing the themes. These new categories are clumped together to create fourteen new categories that include all the collected interview data. With all line by line theoretical categories identified it was necessary to draw together the like categories to allow further inductive theory building. Many of these categories linked logically together and are referred to as axial codes or “cross cutting or relating concepts to each other” (Corbin & Strauss 2008, p. 195). NVivo 8 refers to this new collection as a tree node and this is used as a database to sort and group data for further analysis. This process also allows emerging themes to reveal themselves. Details of these emerging themes are described in Chapter Four (see section 4.2 Thematic Analysis).

Another process—(c) Deconstruction—is applied to extrapolate the data to answer the first research question, “What is trust?”, The theoretical categories were named descriptively, during the coding process, to reflect the speaker’s voice and allow identification of the meaning behind the coded phrase. This illustrative method supported further analysis later. This Third Step to the Thematic Analysis is required to gain an in-depth knowledge of one of the emerging thematic themes. Deconstruction was applied to the multi-dimensional theme. Details of these results are discussed in Chapter Four (see 4.2.4 Thematic Analysis: (c) Deconstruction).

3.3.2.2 Grounded Theory

In relation to the project’s strategies of inquiry and interpretative paradigms, this section examines the impact of Grounded Theory on and within the case study and ethnography. The methodology of research design is extensively analysed and published which allows critical improvement over time. Glaser and Strauss (1967) are the founding authors of
Grounded Theory, paved the way for refinement by Glaser (1978), and others. Also worth noting is the early influence on Strauss’ work of the American pragmatists Mead, Dewey and Peirce (Bryant & Charmaz 2007b, p. 5). Significantly, constructivist Grounded Theory development by Charmaz (2006), a former student of Strauss who also adopted the Chicago ethnographic heritage recognises multiple realities and subjective matters (Charmaz 2006, p. 7). Charmaz claims that that there are three main strands of Grounded Theory today: constructivist, objectivist and post positivist (2011, pp. 364–5). The constructivist approach, as described by Charmaz (2011, pp. 365–6), aligns to Glaser and Strauss’ original theory while incorporating relativity and reflexivity during the Grounded Theory research process. Postpositivist Grounded Theory is seen as a “middle ground” between the two versions—less emphasis on emergence due to a perceived coding framework of data categorisation as well as perceiving “reality as fluid” and hence open to change and evolving. According to Charmaz (2011, p. 365), Grounded Theory is now closer to a constructionism approach. However, on the other hand, it has been seen that Grounded Theory is an evolving methodology with a variety of forms. The form of Grounded Theory employed “depends on a clarification of the nature of the relationship between researcher and participant, and on an explication of the field of what can be known”, according to Mills et al. (2006, p. 2). Constructivist Grounded Theory is positioned at the middle to latter end of this methodological continuum, where the researcher is actively repositioning as the author and reconstructing Grounded Theory experience and meaning as it unfolds.

Charmaz has advocated since the mid–1990s that a constructivist approach to Grounded Theory is both possible and desirable because “data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, the “discovered” reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts” Charmaz (2000, p. 524). The definition adopted for the
project will assist the reader to situate the strategy within the context of this research project. Charmaz (2006) defines Grounded Theory as:

- a method of constructing qualitative research that focuses on creating theoretical frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data. Hence, the analytic categories are directly “grounded” in the data.

The method favours analysis over description, fresh categories over preconceived ideas and extended theories, and systematically focused sequential data collection over large initial samples. This method is distinguished from others since it involves the researcher in the data analysis while collecting data—we used this data analysis to inform and shape for the data collection. Thus, the shape distinction between data collection and data analysis phases of traditional research is intentionally blurred in grounded theory studies (2006, p. 187).

Ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist, constructivist Grounded Theory reshapes the interaction between researcher and participants in the research process and in doing so brings to the fore the notion of the researcher as author. The main development beyond Glaser’s approach pertains to theoretical sampling and analysis. The position taken supports the researcher’s ontological and epistemological paradigm of reality and methods that accord with these beliefs—one that reflects the researcher’s constructivist intent (2011, p. 363). The method used to analyse the data and generate results is in accordance with the Grounded Theory approach. Charmaz (2011, p. 361) summarises this by saying that “the logic of Grounded Theory involves fragmenting empirical data through coding and working with resultant codes to construct abstract categories that fit these data and offer a theoretical analysis of them”.

Charmaz (2005) reinforced previous scholars’ tradition of inductive logic, use of emergent strategies and comparative inquiry as well as being explicitly analytical. Key concepts listed are the logic of the method, the development of different versions of Grounded Theory and their epistemological roots, and how Grounded Theory may be used. In terms of social justice, Charmaz (2011, p. 359) reports that some social justice researchers affirm an “explicit value stance and agenda for change” while others use a “taken-for-granted concern with social justice...a controversial topic that has social justice implications because it could illustrate a theoretical problem” (p. 359). On the other hand, Grounded Theory researchers, according to Charmaz, select a social issue and research it without a preconceived desire to change it. This study was commenced with this frame. However, as Charmaz identifies, it is through the research process that the issues unfold and a desire to make change follows the research. The qualitative research method that Charmaz (2011) asserts is Grounded Theory is defined as:

- a method of qualitative inquiry in which data collection and analysis
- reciprocally inform and shape each other through an emergent iterative process. The term, “Grounded Theory”, refers to this method and its product, a theory developed from successive theoretical analysis of data (2011, p. 60).

One of the benefits of Charmaz’s (2011) Grounded Theory is to advance social inquiry. Theories developed through research vary from emerging theories, or tentative theories to well developed theories that explain how and why a phenomenon functions. In inductive research, identification of patterns are ideally found and form the basis of hypothesis and theory (Bernard & Ryan 2010, p. 266). In particular, according to Charmaz (2011), Grounded Theory provides social justice researchers’ methods which support emancipation of individuals or groups. Saying that it gives:
researchers tools to sharpen and specify their analysis that will increase the
analytic power and influence of their work while simultaneously expediting the
research process...examining established concepts afresh” (p. 359).

Another benefit of Grounded Theory argued by Mills et al. (2006, p. 16) is the positioning of
the researcher in Grounded Theory as a participant rather than an “objective analyst”. This
affords both the researcher and the participants a partnership in the process. Hence, “the
language and writing style help render the collective story of the researcher and
participants into a useful account that has meaning for those in the field” (p. 16).
Furthermore, they state that Grounded Theory provides an avenue for participants “to
move a theoretically sensitive analysis of participants’ stories onto a higher plane while still
retaining a clear connection to the data from which it was derived” (p. 16).

Critics of Grounded Theory identify issues of research integrity pertaining to the subjective
nature of the inquiry. These issues have been covered elsewhere in the thesis. Specifically,
opponents of this approach argue that theories generated from this method are
“substantive in character”, reflecting the context in which they derived and not the broader
range of the studied phenomenon (Bryman 2008, p. 549). However, Charmaz (2011)
provides cogent arguments that support Grounded Theory methods, particularly in relation
to complex and inter connected social phenomenon. Finally, by adopting Creswell’s (2009,
p. 190) notion that validation is an ongoing process, accuracy and credibility of findings
need clarity of procedure in planning, processing, and eventually reporting, this practice
helps maintain authenticity.

A final criticism comes from Bryman (2008) who argues, from an objectivist standpoint, that
the constructivist version “assumes that people create and maintain meaningful worlds
through dialectical processes of conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them” (p. 549). The constructivist Grounded Theory approach recognises that the categories, concepts, and theory emerge from the researcher’s interaction with the research participants and how the data is interrogated. According to Bryman (2008), this differs from objectivist Grounded Theory which implies that categories and concepts are within the data awaiting the researcher’s discovery.

The Grounded Theory processes are briefly described here. However, the detail of procedures is documented in Chapter Three. As described by Charmaz (2011), Grounded Theory interacts with collected data by “moving through comparative levels of analysis” (p. 361). It compares data with data to code it, and then compares data with these codes, followed by comparing codes with and “raising significant codes, to tentative categories”, then comparing data and codes “of these categories”. Finally comparing concept with concept—drawing on relevant discipline such as education and organisational studies—taking form. Charmaz (2011) concludes that “systemic scrutiny [of the data] not only increases analytic precision but also keeps us close to the data and, thus, strengthens our claims about it (p. 361).

Charmaz’s constructivist Grounded Theory is a credible method of analysing phenomenon such as trust. Charmaz argues that “the logic of Grounded Theory involves fragmenting empirical data through coding and working with resultant codes to conduct abstract categories that fit these data and offer a theoretical analysis of them” (Charmaz 2011, p. 361). Within the Grounded Theory meaning-making process, vignettes were developed from field notes to enhance the “contextual richness” of trust narratives at the Vivaldi School (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 83). Miles and Huberman describe a vignette as “a focused description of a series of events taken to be representative, typical, or emblematic
in the case you are doing” (1994, p. 81). Vignettes are a result of the synthesised data analysis and are presented as abstractions with an interpretative perspective (see 4.3.2 Grounded Theory: (b) Construction of vignettes).

As Van Maanen (1979) advises, a “Principal aim of ethnography is to uncover and explicate the ways in which people in particular work settings account for, take action and otherwise manage their day to day situation” (p. 540). Vignettes prove a means to succinctly express the experiences of participants while protecting their identity. Humphreys (2005, p. 842) cites Denzin, maintains that one of the many benefits of vignettes is that they “elicit emotional identification and understanding” (Denzin, 1989, p. 124). Humphreys says that vignettes help in that “the researcher can explicitly question and highlight pertinent thoughts and emotional experiences” (p. 853).

Theoretical methodology discussion precedes this section on the application of Grounded Theory (see section 3.3.2.2 Grounded Theory). Two clear steps provide processes to analyse data: (a) Thematic convergence, and (b) Construction of vignettes. Thematic convergence is recorded during the process to help establish inductive themes. These are reported on in Chapter Four (see 4.3 Grounded Theory) and referred to as a “condensing pathway” (see Figure 22 Condensing pathway: Trust environments).

In the first instance, Grounded Theory informed vignettes were used to retell situations that reflected natural setting experiences between participants and the participant researcher. The vignettes are developed through the lens of the Grounded Theory Thematic Analysis as well as applying interview transcript data to exemplify a grounded theme. Each vignette provides a synthesised representation of each grounded theme, an experience
that embodies the grounded theme in a way that is true to that individual and their contexts.

This process is in accordance with Charmaz’s (2006, p. 10) Grounded Theory approach where it is argued that it “serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them” (p. 10). This analysis stage enabled a review of the data during the data collection process which helped the researcher “remain open to the data” and be able to identify implicit and explicit nuances in the data. Thus, all initial coding categories were developed from the data and reflect an inductive theory building approach.

The coding framework involved a two-step process. The first phase of the coding led to initial data analysis that informed the second approach to coding and analysis and these results are described in Chapter Four (see 4.2 Thematic Analysis). In accordance with the tradition of Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2011, p. 39), the following procedure took place:

1. Collected data (empirical specifics)
2. Compared data as codes were assigned (fragmenting) coding strategies included sorting, synthesising, and summarising data
3. Compared data with codes
4. Compared data and raised important codes to tentative categories (constructed abstract categories)
5. Compared data with codes with these categories
6. Major categories identified as concepts (theoretical analysis of these concepts)
7. Compared concepts with concepts (developed general statements)
8. Compared concepts with education concepts and concepts from the literature.
Stages used reflect Grounded Theory data analytical processes to answer the research questions: What is trust?; How is trust constructed?; What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement?; and What impact do rights and obligations have on trust? The first step involved creating emergent categories using all the collected transcribed data into nominal classifications fitting these data closely. These categories were then saturated by accumulating all of the examples to fit into these categories. Some categories abstracted were very similar to each other so these categories were condensed. A working definition for each category that described the phenomenon was applied. Clarification of the meaning of some of these were sought from the participants and from the reference groups, previously described. Further inductive exploration and comparison of these categories took place to ascertain compatibility and further collapsing of categories into main phenomena took place. Once again, conference with participants and the reference groups took place to seek their perspective on the forming theoretical categories. Further inspection of these categories took place to ascertain if further categories were required. Links between categories were noted and patterns between them were noted and a working deductive hypothesis was developed. This involved contemplating the circumstances under which the links held by theorising about these relationships and the context that created them. The final step was to make connections to existing theory.

Three vignettes are constructed from the condensed data while applying Grounded Theory techniques (see section 4.3.2 Grounded Theory: (b) Construction of vignettes). The vignettes are based on interview data and real experiences between the participants and the participant researcher. The emphasis is placed on the interaction between participants, not on discourse outcomes. Verification of these vignettes took place through the Grounded Theory process. Vignettes are born out of narrative literature (Miles &
Huberman 1994, p. 81), and provide a participant’s synthesis of discourses that reflects the project’s inquiry into trust which is situated at the Vivaldi School. They are a result of the synthesised data analysis and are presented as abstractions with an interpretative perspective.

3.3.2.3 Membership Category Analysis

Membership Category Analysis was developed by Sacks, a student and colleague of Garfinkel (Sacks & Jefferson 1995; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974) and is applied in this thesis as a Membership Category Device (MCD). This analysis applies a deeper understanding of situated talk at the Vivaldi School. The analysis allows a focus on the way participants display their social knowledge within interaction and through their use of Membership Categorisation. Data analysis enables an insight into the way members’ common sense is locally organised through a complex but methodical organisation of social categories. This process reveals schematic categories into devices, or MCD, on trust. Standardised Relational Pairs (SRP) are created, as they connect within the MCD called “trust”, and results reveal participants’ expectations relating to situated trust. The schematic structures are:

units or pockets of categorisation and storing of knowledge or information

cognitive structure with networks of associations that guide our

behaviour...used to classify or categorise our concepts of objects and

experiences on the basis of certain dominant characteristics...stored in

memory as a schema script (Mishra 2008, p. 325).

MCD analysis follows the Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis (CA) line of inquiry, where cultural systems are not viewed as external structures, but as a construct which is evoked by participants during interaction. The theoretical principles of ethnomethodology
that guided the analysis of the data are the analysis of talk-in-interaction based on everyday
language in which understanding is a publicly displayed interactional accomplishment of
the participants, and in which talk is always situated. Through the analysis process,
concepts about trust are uncovered and described. The analysis also reveals ways in which
“social order is ongoingly produced, and more recognisable in and through the practical
actions of the members of society” (Psathas 1995, p. 66).

This process, as previously discussed, is a mapping of acceptable attributes, or predicates,
to these categories, and the grouping of these categories into devices, or MCDs. This
project is concerned about what members think trust is and how they receive and give trust
within the case study site. Therefore, the MCD is called “trust” and the groupings that
enable common sense understanding of trust are through a number of social strategies.
This analysis identified eleven SRPs that sit within the MCD “trust”.

The forthcoming Standardised Relational Pairs (SRP) are presented as examples of talk-in-
interaction between the researcher and participants. Through these semi-structured
interviews, the common, everyday taken-for-granted beliefs about rights and obligations
with particular groups of people are revealed through applying the transcript analysis
techniques developed by Sacks in the period from 1964–1972 and recorded in his “Lectures
on conversations” (1995). Jayyusi summarises Sacks’ application of SRP analysis and firmly
situates moral accountability within the roles and responsibilities of members of an
institution, such as a school.

Sacks’ notion of category-bound actions, rights and obligations not only points out the
moral features of our category concepts, but also provides this for the very moral
accountability of certain actions or omissions. His elucidation of the notion of certain categories as standardised relational pairs. Jayyusi voices Sacks, saying that:

not only uncovers features of the organisation of members’ conventional knowledge of the social world, but clearly demonstrates’, via empirical analysis, how that knowledge is both morally constituted and constitutive of moral praxis—it provides for a variety of ascriptions, discoveries, imputations, conclusions, judgements etc. on the part of mundane reasoners (Jayyusi 1991, p. 240).

Each stakeholder group is analysed separately and a summary of synthesis concludes this third analysis step on MCD. It will be shown that these SRPs provide structure, or framework to the natural accountable phenomena of “trust”. Examples of SRPs associated with trust that represents rights and obligations within the trust MCD follow.

The final data technique applied to this project, Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), based on the theoretical principle of ethnomethodology in which will guide this method of data analysis. The analysis centred on identifying groups of nouns that constituted trust to the members of the Vivaldi School. For example, daughter/father is a Standardised Relational Pair (SRP) of family as they are part of the family and also hold mutual rights and obligations to each other. All SRPs are within the data as common every day taken-for-granted beliefs about rights and obligations with particular groups of people. This MCA process involved the following clear steps:

• All transcribed interviews were exported from the NVivo database and entered into three discrete MS Word 2007 documents (students, staff, and parents).

• The participant groups were analysed using the find and replace function of MS Word 2007. This allowed quantitative analysis of specific word frequency
within cohorts. These words are located in the research journal as possible SRPs.

- Reflexivity was used to inductively identify relationships of trust that constitute SRPs as well as the word frequency analysis.
- Patterns identified were further explored through re-examining the digital recordings to listen to verbal nuances and words that were missed.
- Key exemplar transcripts were analysed using the Simplified Transcript Symbols (Silverman 2006, p. 398).
- All SRPs identified were required to fall within the MCD of trust. An examination of the rights and obligations associated with these are examined and reported on in Chapter Four.

In conclusion, through the Membership Categorisation Analysis, concepts about trust are uncovered and described. Through the study of situated talk at the Vivaldi School, the analysis allows a focus on the way stakeholders or members display their social knowledge within interaction and through their use of Membership Categorisation. Data collected is analysed in the three distinct participant groups: students, staff, and parents. These pairs are situated within the context of the empirical research site. This process uncovers features of the school participants and their conventional knowledge of the social world that specifically relates to and informs trust.

### 3.3.3 Stage Three: Reflections and outcomes

Situated within a constructivist stance, two aspects of the research design, Stage Three reflections, are described in relation to the literature: power relations and reflexivity. These are included here, not exclusively, as power relations and reflexivity impact on all aspects of the project and specifically are embedded in the reflections and outcomes.
3.3.3.1 Power Relations

Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009), acknowledges that the researcher is fully dependent on the participants’ readiness to take part in the research and the control and ownership of the data is in the hands of the participants. They claim that, “the quantity and quality of the data shared with the researcher depend in part on the relationship that develops between the researcher and various participants” (p. 282). Equally, they assert that within the institutional context in which the study is carried out, “motivations can be complementary or contradictory, overt or covert (p. 281)”. However, discussion from the literature is intended to continue addressing concerns over the challenges faced by a participant-observer in a position of power. In relation to the alleged construct of interview subjectivity, the participant-observer—according to Mills and Francis (2006)—designs a strategic interview research methodology that is grounded in a range of constructivist ontological and epistemological underpinnings. They support the view that Grounded Theory is founded in relativism and subjectivism which they claim is “an appreciation of the multiple truths and realities”. They challenge the thinking around the relationship between the researcher and participant and work towards adoption of a “position of mutuality” involving the research course of action and the concept of the subjective participant. This constructivist Grounded Theory stance considers participants as mutual players in their construction of reality during interviews and participation in Grounded Theory development. Mills and Franklin further challenge early models of Grounded Theory and argue that the researcher’s relationships with participants have changed with contemporary methods and that power imbalances are explained and modified by adopting a reflexive stance and planning for productive co-construction. During the interview process, prior knowledge and experiences are acknowledged by either of the parties involved in the interview. Other methods are employed in order not to “dominate” the
interviewee, such as adopting a listening stance as with the use of question selection and interpersonal feedback during the interview to support the interviewee to express their views. After the interview, during the transcript viewing and informal conversation about the research topic, the interviewer assisted in the co-construction of Grounded Theory by helping identify thematic concepts. Reflexive questions recorded in the researcher’s journal assisted in maximising the process.

While positional power remains with individuals, within that role, power is relative. Power is not static. Context, moods, prior integrations, and motivation influence Individuals in the conscious way they enter a conversation, participate in and conclude the conversation. A continuum, explicit or tacit, is felt and displayed between the extremes of domination and submission on a moment by moment basis. This is relative to the mixture of conscious and unconscious insight of the power continuum. Unequal professional power relationships and associated tensions between professionals and their clients during data collection can be minimised according to Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009). They argue that power redistribution between the researcher and the client or participant can be facilitated through a number of strategic approaches throughout the research process. They claim that democratising the research process can consciously move the traditional notion of dominant researcher and passive participant to a more equal partnership during the research process. Karnieli-Miller et al. propose “a theoretical frame for addressing questions of power distribution in qualitative research through a developmental analysis of power relations across the different stages of the research process” (2009, p. 279).

Due to the established relationships with members of the school, the researcher had no difficulty employing rapport-building tactics both inside and outside of the research interview. Some of the tactics, for example, reducing initial anxiety may be offset by the
support of familiarity of surroundings and personnel, including self-disclosure, sharing a cup of coffee, heightened empathy and body language matching (p. 282). Another recommended strategy (Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach 2009, p. 283) was employed by the use of language used with participants regarding the study. Language was carefully used and tailored to the interviewee’s life and academic experience. The researcher also provided open communication that allowed clarification of research processes during the interview. On the other hand, Kvale, according to Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009), argues that “most of the power lies in the hands of the interviewer, who poses the research project, sets the agenda, and rules the conversation” (p. 283).

Recognising and managing dichotomous hierarchical power relationships within the research process are not new concepts. Reason (1994, p. 42) posits that “in traditional research, the roles of researcher and subject are mutually exclusive: the researcher alone contributes the thinking that goes into the project, and the subjects contribute the action or contents to be studied”. Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009) claim that in the health care context, the role division of doctors’ and clients’ positions the doctor as “sole decision maker”. However, the author of this thesis posits that the philosophical context of this research site positions parents and staff as equal partners in the education process and, within this constructivist frame, sets the data gathering process in an inclusive partnership relationship. The semi-structured interview provides a framework for conversation and supports free flowing discourse or direct question answer. Children tend to respond well to the structure when confronted with new experiences such as a research interview.

Given the articulated constructionist stance of this project, an emphasis on co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and participants was carefully staged and in relation to the discussed power continuum, strategies to hear the participants’ voices in the early
stages of the project were strategically managed by this researcher by adopting a
theoretical framework to manage power relations. This was primarily accomplished by
employing a compartmentalisation of “research talk” and “school talk”. This meant that the
researcher made this explicit to the participants, particularly during interviews, that the
process was research-role determined and researcher and participant role behaviours
aligned accordingly. The proposition to maintaining the distance that will allow professional
judgement (Lincoln & Guba 1985) is tempered by professional relationships.

Taylor and Bogan (1998, p. 48) recognise that empathetic and welcoming strategies
employed by the researcher during the interview stage can enhance the interviewee’s
willingness to share personal experiences. This minimises power inequities and further
enhances the construction of a feeling of an “informal, anti-authoritative, and non-
hierarchical atmosphere in which the qualitative researcher and participants establish their
relations in an atmosphere of power equality” (Karniel-Miller, Strier & Pessach 2009,
p. 280). Power relations can be strategically managed at the various stages of the project in
a way to maximise authentic stakeholder participation. The dilemma of an institutionally
perceived hierarchical divide between the school Principal and the parents, students and
staff can be minimised be applying techniques described by Karniel-Miller et al. (2009) or
theoretical framework, based on Karniel-Miller et al. (2009) to manage power relations.

Regarding power relationships during research, Karniel-Miller et al. (2009) claim that the:

research project follows a developmental trajectory, though this is by no
means a linear trajectory, as some stages are done parallel to others and some
occur in the course of the development of research. Each stage has a different
purpose that, to a certain degree, shapes the respective roles of the
participants and the researcher. The developmental nature of the research
process leads to changes in power relations, which pose specific ethical issues for the researcher ((2009, p. 282).

A theoretical framework to manage power relations, based on Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009), are used as a reflexive guide to enable the researcher to enhance participants’ feelings of appreciation and minimise the professional power the researcher holds in the context of the research site while collecting authentic data from the participants.

3.3.3.2 Reflexivity

Building on the philosophical theoretical framework, the next step is to interpret the framework and begin operationalising these stated beliefs and assumptions into the research project design. Blaikie (2010, pp. 50–4) describes this stance as the relationship “between the researcher and the researched”. A continuum of six researcher stances are proposed by Blaikie—detached observer (scientific); empathetic observer (verstehen); faithful reporter (naturalism); mediator of languages (interpretation); reflective partner (conscious partiality); and dialogic facilitator (multi-voiced)—ranging from the scientific “expert” and the detached, to the reduced authority capturing many voices.

As well as these five research stances Blaikie (2010, p. 53) proposes he also includes reflexivity as integral to social research, and quotes Giddens (1984):

The reflexive monitoring of activity is a chronic feature of everyday action and it involves the conduct not just of the individual but also of others. That is to say, actors not only monitor continuously the flow of their activities and expect others to do the same for their own; they also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in which they move (Giddens 1984, p. 5).
Karnieli-Miller et al. (2009), say that with the completion of the data collection stage, formal control and power over the data returns to the researcher. From now on, the story shared with the interviewer is “separated” from the participant, and the researcher becomes the “storyteller” who recasts the story into a “new” historical, political, and cultural context. Interpretive validity, as described by Johnson and Christensen (2012) refers to the degree to which the researcher understands the participants’ “inner worlds” and the “degree of accuracy in presenting these inner worlds” (pp. 265–6). This, they say, depends on the researcher’s ability to “get inside the heads of the participants” (p. 266). These processes are supported by the researcher’s established relationships with the participants and employment of these other described methods such as participant feedback. Participant feedback, or member checking, is used to verify the researcher’s interpretations and conclusions with the participants (Johnson & Christensen 2012, p. 266).

Measures were employed to collect and analyse the data. Key strategies furnished in this project are reflexivity, triangulation, interpretive validity, and participant feedback. Reflexivity, “involves self-awareness and critical self-reflection by the researcher on his or her potential biases and predispositions as these may affect the research process and conclusions” (Johnson & Christensen 2012, p. 266). The researcher’s journal provided an avenue for this critical analysis as well as research and school peer conversations about issues as they arise. Triangulation is applied to look for convergence and corroboration of the data. Johnson and Christensen (2012) argue that, “Triangulation can substantially increase the credibility or trustworthiness of a research finding” (p. 439). This is achieved by employing member checking, participant feedback, dissemination of results, publication and finally multiple analysis methods that confirm the same results.
3.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has worked within the thesis’ methodological framework, as described by Denzin and Lincoln (2011a, pp. 12–5), to examine the methodological issues in relation to answering the research questions (see 1.3.2 Research Questions and 3.3 Methods of collecting and analysing procedures: Phase Four). Methods of collecting and analysing materials are central to this chapter, based on the constructivist theoretical lens that guides all project methodological decision making. The three stages discussed are: Stage One, Data collection; and Stage Two, Data analysis. Within this chapter, the methodology and procedures adopted for the study have been described. The nature of a qualitative study was justified fully and translated into practical actions in this chapter. Details relating to the setting for the study; the students, staff, and parents as the participants of the study; the procedures for data collection, and analysis, all followed.

In Chapter Four, Stage Three of the research design (Reflections and outcomes) all three groups of analysis of the data are reported—Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory and Membership Category Analysis. Integrated discussion about the results of those analyses will progressively relate the emerging critical themes. Following Chapter Four’s analyses, reporting and discussion of results, Chapter Five will go on to examine the findings and the implications for theory, practice and further research. It is the results and discussion in Chapter Four to which the thesis now turns.
School Trust: Situated to maximise school improvement

A case study of a primary school

Chapter Four: Results and discussion
Chapter Four: Results and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous chapter—Phase Four: Methods of collecting and analysing materials—and details Stage Three data analysis: Reflections and outcomes. Chapter Four places the reflections and outcomes in context and leads to the final phase in Chapter Five: The art and politics of interpreting and evaluating.

The data are now collected and analysed using the three categories of analysis: Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory and Membership Category Analysis. These steps are organised in a sequential manner that builds on each level of interrogation. Throughout these three Steps of analysis, the four research questions are used to guide the analysis. Rendering results of each of the three levels of analysis are synthesised. These findings are discussed in relation to the research questions’ and the literature in Chapter Two. The results and discussion are presented in this chapter.

All three levels of analysis use the data generated from the 60 semi-structured interviews collected in the naturalistic setting at the Vivaldi School. In the first analysis Step—Thematic Analysis—three activities are applied to interrogate the data: (a) Initial coded categories, (b) Condensed themes, and (c) Deconstruction. The second analysis Step is designed with two activities pertaining to the Grounded Theory analysis: (a) Thematic convergence, and (b) Construction of vignettes. The final analysis stage is made up of illustrative conversation
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

analysis using Membership Category Analysis, specifically, Membership Conversation Devices.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

The analyses are presented in three clear steps: (a) Initial coded categories, (b) Condensed themes, and (c) Deconstruction. Results revealed: (a) Initial coded categories supported the literature regarding the multi-dimensional and complex nature of trust; (b) Condensed themes identified core themes of a trusting School environment, and (b) Deconstruction, identified a trust profile that explains how trust is perceived by the School participants.

Emerging themes identified from the participants’ semi structured interviews are the basis for (a) Initial coded categories. As previously discussed (see 3.2.1 Thematic Analysis), transcribed interviews were entered into the NVivo 8 qualitative research software. Converging of the data was required to further condense the emerging themes identified in step (b) as Condensed themes. This additional process resulted in a workable thematic structure of all the collected data. These condensed categories are more coherent with the initial stages of answering the research questions. An outcome of this inductive process revealed that a condensed theme called “Understanding trust” contained data that required further analysis. Another process, (c) Deconstruction, was applied to extrapolate the data to answer the first two research questions: What is trust? and How does the School construct trust? This rendered clear themes that directly relate to the members’ conceptions of trust.

4.2.1 Thematic Analysis: (a) Initial coded categories

The theoretical categories were named descriptively, during the coding process, to reflect the speaker’s voice and allow identification of the meaning behind the coded phrase. This
illustrative method supported further analysis later. For example, when a participant talked about their perception of keeping secrets, in relation to trust, this was coded as “secrets”. Through this means, both a coding stripe and a node were created and both were called “secrets”.

This first coding, (a) Initial coded categories, resulted in identifying 143 categories. As explained above, all the interview data were stored in the NVivo 8 software as participant data sources and category or thematic nodes. Detail of Thematic Analysis: (a) Initial coded categories are displayed in Table 2 Sum of each stakeholder group according to the descriptions. The total number of coded nodes per person is a record of how many coded categories were made per person. For example, category nodes included “secrets”, “open”, “listen” and “mistrust”. This is recorded as four nodes. The range in this Initial coded category is 13 to 132 per person.

The number of references per participant refers to the number of coded categories and analyses that apply including matrix coding that were identified per person. This is a guide or an indication of the density of each cohort. The range is between 22 in the student group and 405 in the parent group. The staff maximum is 311. See also Figure 6 Number of references and coded categories per cohort.

Table 2 Sum of each stakeholder group according to the descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of coded categories per participant</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>1 209</td>
<td>1 078</td>
<td>2 782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of references per participant group</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>2 838</td>
<td>2 940</td>
<td>6 770</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This report shows that the parent and staff stakeholder groups provided more data than the students. It is worth noting that the 17 student interviews comprise 28 per cent of the stakeholder group which is 5 per cent below one third of the overall data. Staff represent 37 per cent and parents 35 per cent. However, within the theoretical methodological framework, these mathematically asymmetric sub-case groups within the case study of Vivaldi School do not pose a threat to the quality of the data. More interviews with more students would have rendered similar data. Concept saturation point was reached as the data collected from the students provided similar viewpoints. Accounted for in the previous chapter, three student electronic interviews were accidentally deleted. Nevertheless, while the interviews were collected, but not used, confirmation of saturation is established.

These results also confirm the fact that students are developing their understanding of trust: a dynamic and complex phenomenon. Students talked less than parents and made less divergent responses that could be represented in coding.

Another inquiry into the initial coding is to study the coded nodes, as clusters, and with no relation to the sub-cases or cohort groups. However, with 143 nodes, the information is very diverse and it is difficult to make any generalisations on this. It is later, through the condensing and application of Grounded Theory techniques, that patterns emerge.
4.2.2 Thematic Analysis: (b) Condensed themes

As discussed in Chapter Three, the subsequent analyses involved looking for patterns in the original 143 categories and incorporating these into emergent themes. Further analysis through this merging of themes process helped determine the actions and behaviour that support participants to construct such a trusting school environment. This process of condensing and merging continued until the data were reduced to eight themes. These themes represent participants’ understanding of trust and what constitutes a trusting School environment.

During this converging process, the NVivo facility which allows each individual node to sort and sift through all other categories and exclude them if they do not “belong” to that node, is used. All comments relating to the node are viewed, read, and organised into a separate word document. This facility is applied to develop emergent nodes when clarification and validation is required from the participants. At strategic intervals the node descriptive data are printed and read through by key informants to establish the authenticity of the themes. The informants also confirmed or rejected the placing of minor nodes into larger nodes, as a way of merging and condensing the themes. These results are contained in the forthcoming description of each condensed theme.

The results of (b) Condensed themes are represented in Figure 7 Sources and frequency of references per condensed theme. This analysis shows that Enhancing trust is the theme most frequently spoken of in the interview data set with 552 references. Understanding trust closely follows with 530 references. The Wellbeing theme is the least mentioned with 22 spoken references.
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Figure 7 Sources and frequency of references per condensed theme

This data set is also interrogated to understand the importance that each group—students, staff, parents—places on the identified themes (see Figure 8 Frequency of sources in stakeholder group per condensed theme). No student spoke of matters pertaining to Governance. Students and parents spoke only three times about Wellbeing. Only seven staff spoke of Wellbeing.

Figure 8 Frequency of sources in stakeholder group per condensed theme
The top third of the eight themed data sets are represented by most or all of the participants: Understanding trust, Enhancing trust, and Leadership. Feeling safe was referred to by 15 of the 17 students, 19 of the 22 staff, and 17 of the 21 parents.

Relationships as a theme are represented 11 times by students, all of the parents and 16 of the staff. No students spoke of Governance. Both staff and parents spoke equally of Governance: 16 times. Wellbeing is represented by three students and parents and seven staff. This has maintained as a separate theme due to the considerable relevance of qualitative nature of this data set. These results need further consideration in relation to the descriptive data. It will be shown that some of the described eight themes below have a distinctive overlap and warrant further consideration in order to achieve a more refined result (see Figure 9).

![Chart](chart.png)

**Figure 9** Frequency of sources in stakeholder group per condensed theme
4.2.3 Description of the eight condensed themes

Once the data converged into eight categories, it was possible to report on the case study sub groups or stakeholders (parent, staff, and student) responses. Table 3 reports the number of responses per thematic category from the stakeholder categories. The number of times each person in a particular stakeholder group speaks on a converged thematic topic is recorded, for example, 15 students, 22 staff, and 21 parents spoke about Leadership. From this table, it can be seen that some thematic categories were equally supported by all three stakeholder or participant groups. For example, all interviewed participants spoke about Understanding trust and Enhancing trust conditions. All but three students spoke of Leadership. Details about each of the eight categories are discussed.

Table 3 Number of participants who spoke about the converged theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of Staff</th>
<th>Number of Parents</th>
<th>Total number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohort group</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing trust conditions</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding trust</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistrust</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling safe</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellbeing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the eight condensed themes are reported below. These themes represent the experiences, thoughts, and feelings held by the participants. It is noted that the complex interconnecting relationships between themes is evident and as a result, these themes are to some degree connected and are not discrete units. Notwithstanding the inter-related and interdependent aspects of these trust themes, as they “play out” in a natural setting, some themes will merge into others in the next analysis, using Grounded Theory techniques. This is reported in the forthcoming section 4.3 Grounded Theory.
4.2.3.1 Enhancing trust conditions

All of the participants spoke of subjects relating to the theme Enhancing trust—552 participant references are generated from the recorded data essentially from two interview questions: “How do you think a trustworthy school environment is encouraged?; and “What are the preconditions for a trusting school environment?”. Students were asked to talk about their experiences in a high trust and or low trust classroom. These generated data are summarised as attitudes, behaviours, and processes that enhance opportunities for people to connect with others and develop trust. Overall, this theme shows that all participants are bound by their human need for social connection and belonging.

The teacher’s impact on students emerged from the data, primarily through accounts from students and parents. Teachers talked about the ways in which they developed and maintained varying degrees of trust within the classroom. Key to the success of teacher effect is their in-depth knowledge of each student—their academic profile, social and emotional needs, hobbies, family and some life experiences—all held by teachers to assist them in creating a supportive, trusting environment. Much of this knowledge is developed over time and in context. Teachers observe students’ interactions and interact with individuals and groups of students throughout the day. This “library” of information is referred to for planning and assisting students develop their social competence within the classroom and wider school situation. However, when a teacher is unable to continue as the classroom teacher—for a range of reasons, such as maternity leave—difficulties often arise. Students, parents, teaching colleagues, and School Leadership face ongoing daily challenges that are time consuming and can be emotionally draining. Each student’s relationship with the teacher and the provider of their formal education is interrupted. Trust is broken when teachers leave and subsequently required time to rebuild. When a new teacher takes over the class, students feel emotionally insecure and recognise that the
new teacher has to build a knowledge schema of each individual, for the class and for the school organisation; situating themselves in a new context takes time and emotional energy. Students recognise that there is a hiatus—up to six weeks—between departure of the outgoing teacher and the new teacher’s orientation to them. In this time, when trust is low, students tend to misbehave and this further compounds the loss of learning.

Students recognise the supportive role of the School Hand; Classroom meetings provide routine as a form of security or as a binding agent. They appreciate this common tool. With this, a consistent language that describes behavioural expectations and routines enables the teacher and students to work more coherently and this results in improved learning and behavioural outcomes. There are also consequences applied and this gives confidence and continuity to all. The rights and responsibilities of student behaviour—a framework that links with the Hand—integrate expectations, behaviour, and consequences. It is clear and accessible to all. Tribes’ processes (Gibbs & Bennett 1994), such as class meetings, work to facilitate the Hand values. Class meetings support, affirm, and provide opportunities for students to voice their feelings and issues. Use of this common language validates their individual and collective identity. All but one student reports positive feelings of safety, and the use of the Hand to scaffold behaviour. This reinforces a principle-centred value and behaviours approach. Students report that they feel more supported in a trusting environment and this helped them learn: they take more risks. This common language is evident throughout the interviews and this compounds positive feelings of support, trust, and emotional safety. As described in Chapter Two Boreham (2011) argues that the social need to bind through a common language, behavioural expectations and routines is fundamental to developing collective competence. As a result, this evidence supports the theme (see section 2.4.1 Social capital) that classroom conditions are pivotal to trust.
Staff recognise the responsibility the Principal has to set the expectations for the culture, climate, the strategic direction, as well as the day to day operations of the school. It is argued that conditions for trust are a process and an outcome, as well as everybody’s collective responsibility. However, it is the Principal’s leadership that facilitates these expectations—such as introducing the Hand—in order to create a strong collective understanding of expectations to increase and embed these practices throughout the school. The data demonstrates the importance of collective processes for trust and this is expanded in Chapter Three (see 3.3.3.1 Power Relations) specifically in relation to reliability and constancy. Staff appreciate knowing what the Principal’s expectations are so they can strive to meet them. This in turn builds and enhances individual and collective trust.

Staff value the open, honest, supportive, and respectful relationships established throughout the school. These communication behaviours are modelled by the leadership team and are preferred by staff. Originally modelled on social capital (see 2.4.1 Social capital) and the work of scholars such as Fukuyama (1995) the staff initially developed the values of the Hand and these help facilitate collective processes for communication. Students and parents were also involved during these developmental stages and now, since the development of the School Hand, they are included in the strategic direction of the school as well as being normalised in the school culture. Boreham (2011) further developed the concept of “competence as collective process”, discussed in Chapter Two, (see section 2.2.5 Trust improves student achievement outcomes).

The second sub theme emerging from the data are the importance of managing issues and problems, and resolving conflict. Processes that are clearly communicated are most helpful
as they contribute to supportive conditions for a trusting environment. Schein’s research, as discussed in Chapter Three, identifies this as a critical factor in effective work cultures.

Parents identify the bridge that relationships provide between the school and home. Regular access to staff assists with communication and builds relationships. Staff’s interpersonal and emotional intelligence is recognised as the key to this interface. Consistently responding to individuals and groups of people in a variety of private and public contexts helps build perceptions and expectations that the School is an emotionally safe place. This in turn further enhances trusting relationships, as expressed in the data by students, staff and parents. Parents feel that trust is an important component to all aspects of school interaction and learning. Further detail is reported in the upcoming *feeling safe* theme.

Formal processes were also spoken about by parents. The expectation is held that the School operates according to the legislative framework and that policies and guidelines are established. These are consistent and transparent which allows new staff and School Council members to access them and work within this framework which in turn adds confidence to all.

To summarise, the Hand is a tool that is used by staff to facilitate *enhancing trust* conditions. Students, staff and parents affirm the effectiveness of the Hand. When the Hand is consistently used, students feel emotionally and physically safe and their learning is enhanced. The Hand promotes confidence and reliability in processes and this supports a trusting school. Parents connect these benefits and affirm the Hand as a constructive agent. When the conditions are consistent across the school, students, staff, and parents believe
that the outcomes are improved. Relationships are constructive between the students and the staff and students are better engaged in school, and happier to attend school.

4.2.3.2 Understanding trust

Understanding trust was spoken about by all of the participants—530 references recorded in the understanding trust theme. The complexity of this theme reflects the heart of the studied phenomena and as a result defines trust from the participant’s point of view.

Thematic Analysis in the forthcoming (c) Deconstruction, has revealed the interrelated and interdependent nature of each of these the 15 trust ingredients (reliability, relationships, integrity, openness, competence, keep confidence, feeling safe, feel of trust, reciprocity, respect, situated in context, flow effect—heightened sense of involvement, compassion, faith and it takes time to develop trust). As discussed, Chapter Three section 2.4 Multidisciplinary trust theories, describes the complexity and expanding numbers of scholarly publications on trust theory. The data collected and analysed in this project reflected the complexity of the variety of trust conceptions within the Vivaldi School. In this study, Understanding trust refers to the participants’ responses to the interview question: What is trust?. This data were captured in a theme called “Understanding of trust”. This theme is very divergent and, as a result, an additional analysis was required to extrapolate patterns from the data. This unplanned step, called (c) Deconstruction (see 4.2.4 Thematic Analysis: (c) Deconstruction), is a response to an inductive need within the theory building process which is applied to this project.

4.2.3.3 Mistrust

Fifty-nine of the 60 participants provided a total of 198 references regarding their understanding and experiences of mistrust in relation to the School. Mistrust in its mild form is a lack of trust or confidence with current or future experiences and feelings of
doubt and uncertainty. More intense forms are distrust and are couched within tense suspicion. Breaking of confidence, such as secrets by children, and a lack of confidence toward professional risk-taking, were some of the examples provided in the data. On distrust, Hardin (2004) theorised it to be the “negative side of the encapsulated-interest theory of trust” (p. 8). Trust and distrust are thinking or cognitive process, generated from ones perceptions of reality which are constructed in context.

Students learn that school life does not always meet their expectations. When a peer behaves outside of the defined behaviour boundaries, it is expected that a consequence for the misbehaving student is issued by a teacher. This results in the student feeling supported by the staff and the school processes. However, when misbehaviour is not followed up by staff, students are left with feelings of disbelief and mistrust in the system and of some individuals. In the data, two students spoke of a teacher who they did not trust and cited a number of examples to support this. They report that the teacher does not trust the class and responds to the students in a “mean way” which included “mean faces and eyeballing”. These responses are not limited to disapproval of student behaviour. Students felt uneasy with the teacher’s lack of emotional support toward them and their learning. As a result, they report that they are less inclined to take learning risks for fear of negative comments if they make a mistake. One student said the “tense and scared” feelings this environment manifests results in poor learning.

Building on the data’s revelation of some cases of mistrust in the student–teacher relationship, it was also revealed by a few parents that the parent–teacher trusting bond could be altered. The parents reported that if there were a number of incidents that did not support their view of a trustworthy parent–teacher relationship, and that consequently, suspicious feelings of misgiving and thoughts of uncertainty overrode those, then they
would review the status of the child attending the school. If the parent could not trust the teacher, then the parent would move the child to another school. Significantly, despite the parent’s affirming the school, if they were dubious about the class teacher then they would move their child to another school, and consequently presumably away from their peers and support networks. So the importance of the classroom teacher overrode the collective performance of the school. This result confirms findings by Marzano et al. (2005), as discussed in Chapter Three, this view is also supported in the school improvement literature (see section 2.2 School improvement).

Mistrust stemming from teacher turnover was levelled at the School Leadership through a number of means. Emails, formal and informal conversations, and a formal letter to the School Council about the concerns of teacher turnover including innuendos of professional bullying were active in the first year of data collection. Despite open and honest conversations with the Principal about many aspects of the claims, parents were obviously hearing alternative points of view and did not fully accept the Principal’s rationales. Confidentiality limits detailed disclosure by the Principal and this made it difficult to defend the leadership’s decisions. At that time, the leadership felt that the boundaries between staff professionalism and parents had been blurred by persons unknown, possibly due to “gossip” and misinformation. However, despite the clear guideline of the Public Sector Employment and Management Act of 1993 (PSEMA) Principles and Code of Conduct (2002) clearly stating the professional boundaries of staff, it was disappointing for the leadership team that the mistrust developed. As a result of these issues a few families withdrew their child from the school due to their mistrust in the School Leadership, even though they were satisfied with their child’s teacher.
Some staff responded to the parent’s mistrust of the School Leadership team from a personal point of view. For example, mistrust generated from being letdown or disappointed about a Leadership decision was taken personally. On the other hand, other cases of mistrust were based on an assessment of a leadership decision and this resulted in a judgement to trust or mistrust based on the manner in which the School Leader fulfils their professional role. While there were only a few disclosures, the data analysed revealed how the personal and professional self-doubt expressed by staff was generated from the organisational leadership in relation to school improvement. These provocations can be summarised around change management central to the school improvement agenda: leadership support not meeting teacher individual needs, leadership’s expectations not matching some individual’s professional identity, and the rate of change being too fast which resulted in some people feeling “done to” and not in control.

In summary, mistrust, the antonym to trust, is a reality in all human situations. Hardin (2004) says that “a central problem with trust and distrust is that they are essentially cognitive assessments of the trustworthiness of the other party and may therefore be mistaken” (p. 9). Thus with this improved understanding of mistrust, School leaders are situated in a stronger position to implement supportive and preventative strategies in which the occurrence and intensity of events explored in this theme are minimised. Mistrust cannot be eradicated but its occurrence can be minimised.

4.2.3.4 Leadership

The Leadership theme is generated by 183 references—by 58 participants—two students did not comment. The semi-structured interviews collected data that generated this theme through open ended questions about the School and this direct question: “How did the various people in positions of authority in the school influence a trusting environment?”
Observations, opinions, and feelings about the role of leadership in relation to trust in the School are expressed. Some references to the literature are made, however, the thesis does not argue for a particular leadership standpoint, which is presented in Chapter Two (2.2.4 Principals’ influence on learning outcomes). Through the data, the degree to which these behaviours enable supportive conditions and other behaviours hinder trust are exposed. The leadership traits and behaviours adopted by the School Leadership to facilitate a supportive and trusting environment are described.

School Leaders’ physical presence in the playground and throughout the classrooms gives the students’ confidence that the leadership care enough to know what they are doing and learning in the school. Students appreciate their interpersonal qualities such as listening, being kind, and they help students feel comfortable when talking about problems. Their presence in the playground at recess and lunchtime during outside play sessions gives students opportunities to approach School Leaders with problems in a less threatening environment than an office. They feel that they can share personal information and know that this is respected. All the students are known by name and details about their hobbies and families are known by the Principal and Assistant Principal. The accessibility of School Leaders means that students are individually acknowledged by name, they are available to discuss sensitive issues in a non-threatening environment, and this helps build relationships. It also shows that they care about and have time for the students. Giving students opportunities to share problems indicates that they care about the individual’s wellbeing. This also means that the students are supervised in a positive way, resulting in the reduction of negative behaviours such as bullying. These sorts of behaviours are therefore less likely to occur and cause harm to others and the perpetrators are more likely to get caught. Consistency is noted by students—they know what to expect from adults and that helps them feel at ease. One student said, “They stick to the rules and that’s how I can
trust them because they’re fair to all the students and they [School Leaders] don’t pick out a favourite”.

Staff recognise that the school tone is set by the Principal. Leading by example and the ability then to identify and effectively deal with any pockets of distrust that arise is displayed. Pamela, a staff member said:

Well, it’s their leadership by example and their ability then to identify and to effectively deal with any, hopefully, pockets of distrust that arise because otherwise the distrust can be a bit like a cancer and it can just spread and you get your factions forming and your alignments and all of the stuff that we’ve seen before that we know is counter-productive. So I think it’s crucial for administration to show that trust, to demonstrate that trust and to foster it.

Setting parameters is an important part of that leadership and trust and, therefore, it’s incumbent upon both parties to know what the other person is like. Rapport is essential between the Principal and staff to follow up the clear guidelines. Staff are more productive when they know exactly where they’re going and they need to have those guidelines set out in measurable steps. Staff need to know who’s leading, and who is part of the Leadership Team. They need to know what part they’re playing in the direction and therefore they have a level of comfort, therefore they will have trust in the leader who says, we’re going to go in this direction now. These processes help to unite the school and prevent a “them and us” feeling manifesting. Staff believe that when the School vision is clearly articulated all members feel united and they can work together to achieve the same goals. This focused approach is further enhanced when the School Leaders collectively support and encourage their staff.
When difficult and unexpected issues arise that are not in the interests of the students’, effective management by the Principal with staff is required to ensure students’ needs are met. Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that when difficult issues are not resolved, staff lose trust in their Principal. They found that a Principal, even though he:

- demonstrated respect and personal regard toward teachers and the LSC [Local School Council] members, ultimately he failed to place the needs of his students above all other concerns...[his] lack of integrity—saying one thing but doing another—created distrust of his leadership

(Bryk and Schneider 2002, pp. 53).

Effective leadership requires precision in identifying problems and ensuring change take place in a timely manner. For example, poor teacher performance that is not dealt with runs the risk of becoming entrenched into the school normative culture; an attitude of “anything goes” may result if the teacher does not improve teaching practice. Tschannen-Moran (2004) discusses the difficulties Principals have in managing conflict and how crucial effective resolution is in order to establish and maintain trust and reputation. The consequences of not challenging inappropriate behaviour, such as noncompliance, can lead to tacit acceptance, potentially normalising inappropriate behaviour. According to Tschannen-Moran (2004), non-dealing with challenging staff behaviours erodes trust and confidence. Staff who support the school’s change process and meet agreed expectations feel let down and withdraw their support: resulting in minimal long term change.

The data demonstrated that when the Principal and the Leadership Team interact respectfully with staff then staff feel more trust toward the School Leaders. Communicating in an open, honest, and transparent manner helps staff to feel confident that their professional practice is supported. Listening was identified as a crucial quality of the
Principal and all the School Leaders. Showing that listening supports staff emotionally which in turn assists problem-solving issues with both the School Leaders and the staff. Leaders also help identify barriers or blockers to work—if the staff are happy, most often the students and parents are happy. Staff reported that when treated with dignity they then felt appreciated and were more willing to be a “team player” which builds reciprocal trust. Personal qualities that reduce uncertainty are appreciated: being calm, relaxed, stable, considered, respectful, being predictable, and having a capacity for remembering—helps everything just seem to flow.

Parents see the Principal’s role as the most crucial role in the school: it’s the foundation, the starting point, because the Principal influences everything in respect of policy, Council, parents, students, and the staff. They are the link between the Department of Education (DET) and staff, students and parents. Directives from the Minister are interpreted by DET. It is the responsibility of the Principal to implement these directives at the school level in the most appropriate manner that reflects the needs and characteristics of their School context. Parents say they appreciate the complexity in fulfilling these directives while meeting the other School requirements. Parents recognise and affirm the positive tone that permeates from the Principal’s office through to the rest of the school.

Data collected demonstrates that participants of the Vivaldi School see the Principal as a symbol of unity: one who sets the tone for everything. This following section describes, in summary, participants’ views of the Principal, demonstrating that movements are observed and commented upon by everyone. The Principal sets the vision and the standards: educational standards and behaviour, and standards such as punctuality and dress. Personal integrity is modelled by the Principal to build trust and good relationships. Confidential matters are handled discreetly. Professional qualities such as honesty and non-
defensive responses are noted and appreciated. Parents spoke of a number of behaviours they observed and appreciated about the Principal and the Assistant Principal. All of the behaviours promote accessibility and relationship building, such as being visible and approachable most days in the playground and at the School assembly. As reported previously, parents say that the Principal cares about every child: all the students and names are known, as are details about their family and hobbies. It is obvious that the best interests of the school are central to the Principal’s thinking and that there is no self-interest blurring decision-making. One parent said that they felt trust that the Principal cares:

[Caring behaviour offered] for students, for their wellbeing and for their learning. If our Principals’ are focused, if they’re leaders, if they’re developing their staff, if they genuinely care about educational outcomes for the students and develop a culture of excellence in the school and continuous [then] improvement for teachers and for students, it is central (parent).

The Principal is responsible for managing the change of staff and relies on staff to mentor new staff. When people have differences, the Principal listens. Sometimes power is used to rectify the situation.

The Principal’s commitment to team building is observed by parents. Parents report that the leader is responsible for working together with the staff, leading from both the top and from within the group in a united manner. This results in the staff feeling supported and happy. If the supported staff are happy and feel valued, then classrooms’ environment will be supportive. A lot of that is to do with an individual teacher’s personality—if they are team players themselves—but parents think that is really important. According to the parents, there are no barriers; the Principal listens to concerns. Team building and feeling
supported are observations verified in the data by parents. They say that the office staff are happy, helpful, courteous and knowledgeable about the school. In relation to leadership, one interview question asked, “How do the various people in positions of authority in a school influence a trusting environment?” As one staff member explains:

Well, by example. I guess what we [School Leader] do in the classroom modelling, and walk the talk because you can say I want this and I want it to be...but if you don’t behave that way it won’t happen. I think showing examples from the Principal down and how you treat others, how you act out your day. I think children will model that behaviour. I think if you treat children with the respect that you want from them then you will get that (staff Bob).

This short transcript, from a staff member’s perspective, shows that leadership sets the tone and structures in place to provide a supportive environment in which the school operates smoothly and problems are resolved quickly. In short, when staff are competent this promotes and supports trust. On the other hand, when the Principal says one thing and does another, then the staff may mistrust the Principal and as a result may not follow the Principal’s requested behaviour. With a negative influence for staff, then the Principal’s leadership is significantly reduced.

4.2.3.5 Relationships

References that relate to the theme of Relationships are recorded by 48 participants—totaling 161 references. Relationships cut through all aspects of the interview data. Throughout the data from all stakeholders, the connection between trust and relationships was well documented: connecting with others in supportive ways provides opportunities to build trust and apply trust. Associations between friends, classmates, colleagues, student–teacher, parent–teacher, teacher–teacher relationships, to list a few, are vast, varied, and
interconnected. Relationships help build understanding, empathy, and bond people emotionally. This theme recognises the importance of positive emotions and the effective management of negative emotions. Negative emotions and experiences are discussed in the themes of mistrust.

The concept of relationship is arguably a core component of being human. This core element forms diverse methods of communication from culture to culture as well as permeating cross-cultural boundaries that drive humans to connect. The data from all stakeholder groups attached the importance of positive relationships to their concept of trust. Regardless of participant race, age, or gender, this connection was consistently voiced. These results build on the work of Bryk and Schneider (2002) and are described in Chapter Two (see section 2.3.2 Bryk and Schneider).

Students predominantly identify with the aspect of “time required building relationships” and associated this with confidence in secret keeping—“good friends keep secrets”. They recognise that relationships are fostered through formal and informal classroom activities, as well as interactions outside of this. The School Hand that sets out the five expectations or values of the school on each appendage with the school motto on the palm was cited by most students as a genuinely useful tool to both grow relationships and sort through associated issues when they arise. One of the school values is “communicating effectively” and the importance of effective communication is also linked with trust and the Hand.

Most of the teachers at the School have participated in Tribes: A new way of learning together (Gibbs & Bennett 1994) professional learning. This approach provides teaching processes in which classrooms establish a supportive learning community and embed the School Hand values into the classrooms’ ethos. From the classroom, the School Hand helps
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

support a common understanding and expectation of values and behaviour norms throughout the school. The purpose of maintaining a common expectation of care and support is to include newcomers into the school culture and remind ongoing members of the value of caring relationships as depicted on the Hand.

Parents and staff talk about the aspects of communication in terms of relationships and trust building. Words such as, “open” and “honest” are used often to help qualify the preferred approach to communication and relationship building. By way of illustrating this in action, the willingness of staff to actively contact parents, whether in the playground or by phone or email, were noted as distinct qualities of Vivaldi School. Parents and staff actively engage in regular school community events, such as Harmony Day and Father’s Day breakfast, as well as the annual bush dance. These events provide opportunities to interact with others and build relationships in an informal manner. It was said that when difficult conversations are required, the relationships, built over time and during social events, act as a buffer and help maintain a respectful, open and honest rapport. Associated with this is the perception of authentic relationships based on genuine listening with the intent to improve and maintain confidentiality when required.

School Council explicitly endorses the benefits of school community events and includes at least one event per school term (four per year) in the annual strategic plan. These opportunities generate both economic and human capital. The interactions validate existing relationships as well as grow new ones. Staff perceive these gatherings as “a bit of work”, but at the same time, understand their significance. This finding supports Kochanek’s (2005) research that argues that trust is developed in schools through making people feel at ease, suggesting for example, that: “when trust is low, and therefore, vulnerability [is] high, one must propose low-risk activities to engage people in interactions” (p. 83).
The association between trusting relationships and time is recognised by students, staff and parents. Most people recognised that it takes time to develop a deep and reciprocal relationship that incorporates a resilience to withstand a difficult conversation. In the literature, Kochanek’s (2005) research in *Building trust for better schools: research-based practices* concludes that deep professional conversations are required to develop opportunities for relationships to develop beyond the superficial, to a level that demonstrates one’s competence and integrity. While Kochanek describes the importance of “putting others at ease”, as well as frequent opportunities to interact in non-threatening social situations, these alone are not sufficient to build high level “School Leadership for School reform” (pp. 80–81), as Bryk and Schneider have also elaborated.

4.2.3.6 Feeling safe

Descriptions, experiences, and expectations about feelings and beliefs relating to safety are reported by 51 participants—a sum of 155 references. These understandings pertaining to safety are expressed in diverse ways by different participant stakeholder groups. The results and discussion follow.

Students usually reported feeling physically safe at school. On two occasions boys spoke of feeling physically threatened by another male student. One of the boys, when new to the school, reported threatening behaviour to his parent who subsequently expressed her concerns to the classroom teacher. In a manner typical of the Vivaldi School, the teacher dealt with this immediately through a regular class meeting. The teacher disguised the alleged harassment by presenting a scenario in which the class was required to problem-solve a solution. Anonymity is maintained and the threatened boy and his parent express appreciation and feel supported when teachers act promptly and effectively. The teacher
used the School Hand, in conjunction with the Tribes agreements, as a framework to model social skills with the class.

Another report of feeling unsafe is a more complex example. A student reported to the Principal that the classroom teacher left the classroom during lesson time. While nothing happened such as a student being injured, the reporting student felt emotionally unsafe with the potential of being physically harmed. The teacher’s behaviour is clearly a breach of loco parentis and the teacher was observed by the Principal and reminded of the responsibilities to supervise students at all times. Unfortunately, the behaviour changed only temporarily. When this behaviour returned the Principal was required to send an official letter about this behaviour and seek a justification. Unfortunately, soon after the teacher was sick for some weeks and the class was taught by a series of unsatisfactory relief teachers and complaints from some parents followed. The teacher in question related misinformation about the incident and that lead to temporary tension between some staff members and the Principal.

Emotional safety is spoken about by many of the students. In summary, they believe that a well organised and disciplined classroom ensures a safe classroom and consequently a feeling of reliable safety and a supporting environment for learning. In a well-managed class, students felt that risk taking during learning, such as answering questions during discussion time was improved and that they felt less ashamed if they made a public mistake. The use of the Tribes agreements and the School Hand were also validated as effective means to support classroom security, both physical and emotional.

Parents spoke of bullying but felt that the school listened and took complaints seriously and followed them up and resolved the issues. Most parents expected that their children will be
safe at school. It was revealed that the lack of a school boundary fence caused some concern to some parents of younger children. Over the course of the data collection phase, there was heightened community anxiety around itinerants walking through the school grounds. As a response to this a safety committee was formed to identify issues and investigate. To further contribute to the parent’s anxieties, were the print, radio, and television media sensationalising any incident around possible safety threats to children. Anxious parents receive these rumours and contact the School for additional surveillance of students. During the data collecting phase, the numbers of children walking to school unaccompanied by an adult decreased. The number of students being dropped off by car increased. While this is an observation, it does support a hypothesis that parents are increasingly less trusting of the neighbourhood streets.

Staff spoke about emotional safety and the connections with learning. Feelings of happiness associated with emotional safety are expressed by staff, students and parents. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to ensure a safe environment for all children. Staff spoke of bullying behaviour and ways of managing this, such as assertiveness training. However, during the data collection, staff did not identify other forms of physical safety with trust. Informally, after the Principal spoke to staff about this, there was confirmation of the importance. However, initially they were surprised that parents were so concerned about safety. Once staff considered the increased media coverage of child abductions they understood parents’ concerns. The safety committee conducted a safety audit and the recommendations are implemented.

One staff member reported, “…safe constitutes a number of levels. There’s obviously your physical safe, there’s your emotional safe, psychological safe…I think safe and trust are probably so closely aligned”. This connection with trust and safety is made in the literature
and described in section 2.4 Multidisciplinary trust theories. An example in the data by Jessica, School Leader, talking about what trust “looks like”:

Meaning that it looks like people having a go, to take risks and by that I mean, we’ve recently asked people to a program to a certain set of guidelines and then to share and unless they feel that they have, they feel safe within their teaching group, they won’t feel happy to share what they’ve done in case it’s not good enough. So they’ve got to trust that they’re not going to be ridiculed, they’re going to be actually supported and valued by what they put in (School Leader Jessica).

Another perspective from a staff member:

Absolutely, yes; that ideas aren’t slammed straight away. That opportunities to learn are all there, it’s not a disciplinary – if you make a mistake it’s okay, it’s an opportunity to learn, let’s get on with it with support and what can we do next time kind of environment rather than a disciplinary action to anything that might crop up or go wrong or whatever. So I think definitely. Making yourself available to staff as well. So the leadership team being available to talk and take things seriously and not then use it later. So, definitely, yes (staff Jill).

4.2.3.7 Governance

Ninety-two references are recorded concerning Governance—which represents 32 participants—staff and parents, students did not comment on this theme. In relation to trust, the Governance theme incorporates staff and parents’ perceptions about the impact of the School Council and the Department of Education and Training (DET, and formerly DEET) on the governance of the School. This is the only theme to which students did not contribute. School Councils, in the Northern Territory, provide a democratically elected group of parents and teachers with responsibilities under the Northern Territory of
Australia Education Act 2012 to establish the strategic direction of the school and approve the annual financial budget. A member of the School Council, usually the Chair, holds a voting place on the selection of senior staff and support staff including the Administration Manager. Teachers are employed by DET. Staff are paid directly by DET. Government Schools receive their financial operational funds primarily from the state/territory government. As a result, there are particular characteristics of self-governing. In the literature, Bryk and Schneider (2002) described the advantages of decentralised decision-making and its correlation with school improvement and in some schools a combination of selecting suitable staff and other factors improves student achievement levels. The social capital developed by increased parental involvement through self-managing schools is discussed in Chapter Two (see section 2.2.1 Parent dissatisfaction with public schools and 2.3.2 Bryk and Schneider). Douglas and Harris (2008) provide a summary of the way in which successful school governance operates and in many ways echoes the data collected at Vivaldi School in relation to the Council work.

While school boards/councils oversee all policies and decisions made by their schools, they do not manage day-to-day issues and administrative work which is done by other groups in the school...These boards/councils actively encourage and support innovative practices which could lead to school improvement (Douglas & Harris 2008, p. 50).

The Education Department provides guidelines for staff and directly enforces the Northern Territory of Australia Education Act 2012 which includes student behaviour, curriculum, assessment, and certification. Some staff and parents report that DET’s influence is not always obvious; this is changing with the development of a website (see <http://www.det.nt.gov.au/>). School Council is an avenue through which to build trust
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

through demonstrations of integrity, competence, and reliability. All three concepts are closely related. A parent reports:

School Council is an avenue for the wider community to vent their concerns and ‘look into what is going on’. Yes, I think that’s very—I mean, [the Council Chair] is really good in terms of what you are doing here. These are the positives and negatives, this is what Council needs to know, this recommendation I’m making or a decision I’ve made whatever and these are the reasons and so. There’s a little bit of trust there that I don’t need to know your job. You know your job. School Council works closely with Principal...Planning to cater...I believe that a Council is there to monitor the school’s performance and to plan the school’s strategic plan if you can call it that way.

Similarly, staff supports these parents’ views. However, a teacher expresses concern with the role of DEET saying that the support structure for schools is inadequate:

I think there was a real gap between schools being islands in a system and DEET only ever really engaging when things went wrong as opposed to understanding what’s working well, how do we develop what’s working well and share that with other schools. Silos. So there’s a much stronger role for DEET there to understand what’s happening in schools, understand where things were working well, how do we share that knowledge of what’s working well with like schools and bring them along, rather than sit up in divisional centre and just see the accounts come in and the books come and look at the results and if something’s going wrong, jump on it.
That gets down I think to better communication and understanding that our job is to actually support schools and Principals and teachers for the best outcome of kids. I think that’s where DEET’s role is.

Of course they have an influence because they’re the leaders of the leaders and I actually, I think in all honesty they have been, unconsciously I think they have been creating an element of distrust over the last 18 months, two years.

And I’m not just talking about it from the Vivaldi School, my point of view, I’m talking about it, about teachers from virtually every school who are saying, you know, saying very similar things about what we’re being expected to do, what’s, you know, what’s changing. You say, look, it’s the same at our school, you know, it’s obviously coming down from the top. But there’s a lot of distrust out in the teachers’ community at the moment as a result of stuff that appears to be coming down.

Parents and staff recognise the immediate role of the School Council—under the banner of the Education Act—in setting the strategic direction of the school, selecting key leadership staff, and overseeing the financial budget. On the other hand, both staff and parents recognise that the Education Department is responsible for ensuring that the Education Act is implemented in all schools, the day to day operation is marginally understood, and hence the lack of trust expressed in the transcript above.

4.2.3.8 Wellbeing

Twenty-two references by 13 staff participants refer to aspects of wellbeing—confirmed that trust is a feeling and cognitive process that enhances a sense of individual and
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Community wellbeing. This manifests in individual interpersonal interaction and structural decision-making: both avenues contributing to the wellbeing of individuals and a consequence of “things going right”—a collective positive “feel” of Vivaldi School—spoken about extensively throughout the interviews and during ad hoc interaction as a participant-observer. All of these factors are interdependent and difficult to extrapolate. However, it is noted that this condensed theme ranks low in terms of the number of references made by participants. It is evident, nonetheless, by the value placed on this theme is considerable as it permeates the data and is therefore, encased within other condensed themes. For example, relationships require affirmation of mutually positive experiences: wellbeing. The complexity of categorising and reporting this concept within the natural setting of the case and within a focus of trust is challenging.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young (2008) recognises the essential responsibility that education has in building a nation that reflects values for the 21st century—being competent to compete within and beyond Australia. The preamble says:

> Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation’s ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. Schools share this responsibility with students, parents, carers, families, the community, business and other education and training providers. In recognition of this collective responsibility, this declaration, in contrast to earlier declarations on schooling, has a broader frame and sets out educational goals for young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education 2008, p. 4).

The complexity of trust’s association with wellbeing is difficult to compartmentalise into one discrete section as there are many interconnecting features of wellbeing, as discussed
in Chapter Two (section 2.5). This multidimensional nature of wellbeing and trust is not tangible. Yet, the data revealed that people know when they have a positive feeling of wellbeing and can also affirm a positive “feel” of a school. The ability to recognise alternative and negative feelings, both personal and internal to self, helps participants understand more about this. This view is not to simplify this concept into a dichotomy such as positive and negative or good and bad. Rather, this metaphor is used to exemplify in a tangible way, a feeling that is non-tangible yet real to many participants in this study.

Staff describe an equal and reciprocated relationship which feels good. Both parties work from a framework of mutual respect. Decision-making is efficient creating a feeling of professional “closeness” and wellbeing. Within the dynamic, staff felt confident to contribute to professional discussions. Group problem-solving supports divergent thinking and professional identities are validated. Goleman (2006) describes this as rapport: “When people are in rapport, they can be more creative together and more efficient in making decisions” (p. 29). Rath and Harter’s (2010, p. 6) identified five elements of wellbeing: Career, Social, Financial, Physical and Community wellbeing. “Career wellbeing” pertains to everyday life including work. Strong relationships and love relate to “Social wellbeing”. Management of finances affect “Financial wellbeing”. Good health and energy concern “Physical wellbeing”. “Community wellbeing” reflects on feelings of safety and willingness to contribute to the community. The staff spoke of Career, Social wellbeing, and Community wellbeing. Parents spoke of Social and Community wellbeing. Students spoke about Social wellbeing. The significance of these results is discussed in the upcoming discussion section.

The by-product of high functioning relationships is personal and professional wellbeing. With this is another by-product: increased performance. However, coupled with this
enhanced sense of *wellbeing* is the social responsibility to apply this positive *wellbeing* in a critical self-reflexive manner—maintaining commitment to learning and the School. An enhanced state of professional wellbeing may give a feeling of freedom and power which requires appropriate use of that power in which the respect of others is maintained, regardless of their professional position. Tempering and balancing these require individuals to internally monitor these feelings and behaviour and ask of self and others questions that enable critical reflexive analysis of situations—before and after. Workplace strategies assist individuals and teams to critically monitor these issues.

Parents spoke about happiness being a central component of a positive and productive school experience. They reported that happy children and happy staff build a sense of community and better educational outcomes. The knowledge of children’s names and family details by the Principal down to the Maintenance Office was noticed and appreciated by parents. This also refers to the degree participants can access people and retrieve resources that impact positively on supporting a trusting environment—leadership, stakeholders, teaching resources given to students to help support a positive relationship and community environment. The data shows that the School Leadership strategically selected appropriate resources for staff and students that provided suitable availability and collective understanding of school expectations on social discourse. This favored a coherent approach which resulted in a feeling of wellbeing amongst stakeholders. Parents also spoke of the importance of being able to talk with the Principal and School Leaders to seek clarification and express concern with the expectation that issues will be taken seriously and resolved. One parent said, “Yes, I like a Principal who goes around and doesn’t stay in his or her office, but who goes to the hallway and goes out and talks to the children and creates a relationship with the parents and the children. Because there are some Principals who just stay behind the desk and that’s why when students then have to go the Principal
they know that they’re in trouble”. Parents appreciate the direct access they have to the Principal, and other school leaders, so that positive relationships are developed and maintained. Relationships with staff are seen by parents as important in developing trust and wellbeing within the school. These points are discussed in Chapter Two (see section 2.4 Multidisciplinary trust theories).

4.2.4 Thematic Analysis: (c) Deconstruction

A third step to the Thematic Analysis is required to gain an in-depth knowledge of one of the emerging thematic concepts. (c) Deconstruction was applied to the multi-dimensional theme Understanding trust. Deeper analysis is designed to identify themes within the coded theme. Specifically, participant opinions about trust are held within the Understanding trust theme. A second stage of coding allows a vigorous examination of these viewpoint and subsequent answer to the first research question? “What is trust?”

To achieve this, all the data stored in the node theme Understanding trust are sub-divided into three participant groups: student, staff, and parent. These three categories are imported into a new NVivo project called Understanding trust. Re-coding of the data further breaks down the participants view of trust as well as categorising them within each stakeholder group.

The deconstructed data on the theme called, Understanding trust identified 15 themes of trust. These newly created themes are both indicators of trust as well as elements of trust. The chart below shows the name of each trust indicator and the number of times it is referred to in the interviews and the number of sources. There were three possible sources in this deconstruction phase: students, staff, and parents. Eleven of the 15 indicators were spoken about by all three sources groups. The other four groups were spoken about by the adults but not by the students. The chart below reports the themes pertaining to
Understanding trust. The most frequently spoken was Reliability with 66 references (see Figure 10 Understanding trust: frequency of participant’s comments). Each ingredient is individually described presently.

![Bar chart showing references and sources for various trust ingredients]

Figure 10 Understanding trust: frequency of participant's comments

Importantly, the quality and emphasis of these human interactions are generated within the natural setting. The deconstruction, as shown in Figure 10 Understanding trust: frequency of participant's comments, is an extrapolation of the data, generated from contextual interaction between people. Through this analysis, disclosure of society’s culture and moral order of trust identifies 15 out of context, to seek commonly held themes from the case study participants and within the sub case groups. Further analysis will help establish the significance of this finding. Paradoxically, however this result is expected to
highlight the Ethnomethodological analysis and the way social groups use “taken for
granted” language to make meaning from their social environment. Deconstruction is
insightful as it identifies the core 15 themes of trust that are enacted by people.

4.2.4.1 Reliability

Reliability is referred to 66 times—33 times by parents, 18 times by staff and 15 times by
students. This data is displayed in Figure 11 Reliability: reference frequency.

![Reliability bar chart]

Figure 11 Reliability: reference frequency

A parent demonstrates the interrelated nature of reliability. He theorises reliability as
“consistent”, an expectation and sometimes a confidence:

It’s almost a consistency thing. You trust a person will not misuse your money
if it’s a banker. You trust a person to tell you the truth if it’s something else.
You trust the person to do the job or you trust a person—it’s often an
expectation and that they will deliver in some way whether in behaviour or in
attitude or keeping a confidence or whatever it might be. (Darcy).

Reliability, according to the data, is the belief people hold that someone could be trusted
reliable or dependable. Reliability is demonstrated through behaviour. When people fulfil
their obligations they are perceived as dependable and this gives confidence to others.
Leaders who are reliable give certainty to the School and this promotes a positive sense of direction and achievement.

4.2.4.2 Relationships

*Relationships or friendships* are fundamental to any community. The importance of positive connections with like-minded people is described in terms of support and this is central to the work of schools. The 61 references are divided across the three groups and these details are displayed in Figure 12 Relationships: reference frequency.

![Figure 12 Relationships: reference frequency](image)

Pamela, a staff member, states:

> I firmly believe that building those relationships, which of course trust is pivotal to, are, in my role I think it’s a bigger part than the actual teaching. Because once you’ve got that trust there the teaching just flows (Pamela).

Effort is required to develop and maintain *Relationships*, as discussed in the literature (see 2.3.2 Bryk and Schneider). A purposeful confidence to greet newcomers and help alleviate any of their anxieties helps begin a new relationship with good will. Sustaining relationships requires a continual willingness to persevere despite challenges. Skills are employed that prolong relationships including interpersonal skills of communication (listening, paraphrasing and empathising), reflective contemplation about the relationship, and
considering possible further opportunities for interaction. These comforting relationships bind stakeholders together. They validate their identity, providing meaning and purpose to their life. Cultural norms are also reinforced and challenged.

Relationships bind stakeholder groups together. They unite difference through commonality. These connections provide avenues of learning about each other. Areas of tension and possible barriers are recognised; if and when these are spoken of depends on the situation. Respectful relationships are mutually supporting and efforts are made to minimise each other’s anxieties. For example, Melinda, a parent states:

I guess trust needs to be part of every, the dynamic of every relationship and in the school setting there’s so many different relationships isn’t there and relationships between staff and staff, principal and staff, staff and students, students and students, parents and staff, parents and students. So I guess integral to all of those relationships is an essential ingredient of trust…being able to rely on someone knowing that they won’t betray you, and then the flip of that is being trustworthy, where someone can rely on you and know that you won’t betray them...So I guess in those various relationships, with their varying dynamics, their varying power play and [unclear] and so on, then that’s going to look different each time.

The example here reflects Melinda’s recognition of the crucial role relationships play in binding stakeholders together. In this next example, staff member Abby, talks about her difficulty when she did not experience a trustful, respectful relationship from a supervisor. As a result, the barrier she felt impacted on her personal wellbeing and her work.

Having to be checked and double checked, and rechecked...Relationships always have to be two sided. But yeah, I just, there just wasn’t any feeling of
trust that seemed to be coming from her...start to self-doubt and I start to think well, okay, maybe it’s me that’s got it wrong, you know...I tend to withdraw from the person or the situation. Depending on how critical it is I can end up becoming sick. It can make me physically ill depending on the intensity of the situation or the relationship. So I can transfer it into physical symptoms I suppose I can say.

4.2.4.3 Integrity

*Integrity* is used by one child. However, staff and particularly parents recognised this concept with trust. Killinger (2010) argues that “integrity is a personal choice, an uncompromising and predictably consistent commitment to honour moral, ethical, spiritual, and artistic values and principles” (p. 12). As described in Chapter Two (see 2.4.2 Definitions of social trust) Killinger reminds the reader to resist temptation to meet self-serving needs and maintain integrity through applying moral choices. Forty-two parents spoke of this as evident and important—only 13 staff referred to integrity (see Figure 13 Integrity: reference frequency).

![Integrity Chart](image)

**Figure 13** *Integrity: reference frequency*

Lavina, a parent, has confidence that the school is making decisions “in the best interests of the children”: 
I think it’s a little bit the same. In a school setting, as a parent, you have to trust that the care is there, I guess, because you can’t be there to fix it all. So, yes, that’s the first thing you do is, yes, they go off to school and there are so many people who are there to make sure each day is in the best interests of the children, and we do have to believe that that will always remain the focus and trust that the people, the teachers and the assistants and the ladies in the office, they’re all focussed on the fact that parents do need to trust that environment so that when you have cases where, I don’t know whether it’s happened here, but in Melbourne when the two little boys were abducted by the grounds person. All these measures, and more and more measures come into place then to make sure we can trust the school environment (Lavinia).

Parents have assumptions about the professional role of teachers, as discussed in section 2.4.2 Definitions of social trust. The reason parents did not include “confidential” in their descriptions of trust is that it is a “taken-for-granted” role responsibility. However, integrity is more widely used by parents and confidentiality is contained within this term.

4.2.4.4 Openness

Openness is often referred to by the adults in the school community as a willingness to physically, mentally, and emotionally connect with others about the work. Openness is often connected with “honest”. Staff say that they are open to new ideas and will act in an honest manner. Similarly with integrity, children did not articulate this element. Parents and staff recognise openness in connection with building trust and contributing to trust in similar amounts, totalling 53 references (see Figure 14 Openness: reference frequency).
Both parents and staff express their connection with trust and being open:

Trust to me is, I don’t know, I suppose like being able to talk to someone without them going around gossiping with anyone else about it. Yes, just being open for them I suppose. That’s what trust is to me I suppose (Parent Adela).

Being honest and open, or being comfortable to be honest and open and lay your cards on the table I suppose (Teacher Cecil).

Openness is associated with a transparent management style. Staff and parents feel that there is a free-flow of information. Power is not used to withhold necessary information. Rather, enquires are appreciated. Parents also speak favourably about the Principal’s accessibility, often being in the playground, and approaching parents to ask their views on school matters. Stakeholders are encouraged to give feedback and their ideas are often incorporated. This, in turn, adds to the school’s reputation of being open and being willing to learn from others.

4.2.4.5 Competence

Competence is closely linked with integrity. Staff talk about “walk the talk”, meaning that people’s actions match their words. For example, in a meeting, when a decision is made
and someone states that they will audit the reading books, then they fulfil this promise in a competent way. Tasks such as organising events are done well and people can rely on the standard. Ten and 11 year olds did not talk about competence in relation to trust. Parents spoke about it 28 times and staff 18 times (see Figure 15 Competence: reference frequency).

![Figure 15 Competence: reference frequency](image)

Bill, a staff member, speaks about the effect on the relationship between trust and competence. Students know that Bill will thoroughly investigate a complaint in a competent manner and this gives students a sense of confidence and security. He comments:

> My ability to find out both sides of the story, and I think that goes towards trust in an educational setting, that they know [students] I’m not going to take one side of the story necessarily. I think impartiality; they regard me as being impartial and have confidence in my ability to report all the facts (staff Bill).

The Principal’s ability to follow up poor performance is discussed by Tschannen-Moran (2004). This competency is key to maintaining staff respect. The data on this matter was scant but demonstrated the difficulties this matter presents and this is discussed in the next Chapter. Though, Bill, a staff member who holds a School Leadership position, spoke of the relationship between trust and competence:
4.2.4.6 Keeping confidence

Keeping confidence is both a social and professional requirement for gaining and maintaining trust. Students spoke about disclosing personal information in the form of a secret to a trusted friend. Maintaining this confidence is highly regarded by the students—20 references in the cohort of 17 students. Staff made 20 references to professional confidential matters and demonstrated the expectation that confidential means keeping the matters within the designated boundaries (see Figure 16 Keeping confidence: reference frequency).

![Bar chart showing competence levels for Parent, Staff, and Student.]

**Figure 16 Keeping confidence: reference frequency**

Barbara, as a staff member, associates keeping confidence with trust:

Know that it is something majorly confidential, that you can go forward and say whatever it is, and know that that person is not going to go directly to someone else and use your name too—that’s a big thing. That goes a long way in trust, I think, to know that your name is not going to be brought into an issue if it’s got to be sorted out (staff Barbara).

A difficulty was highlighted when a confidential matter affected parents. As consumers of the product of school education, parents were unhappy that a staff member did not have their contract continued. However, the reasons were around performance, a confidential
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

matter, and it could not be discussed. In this case, a degree of mistrust was levelled at the School Leadership as parents wanted the teacher to continue. Only two parents raised this matter in relation to trust.

4.2.4.7 Feeling safe

Feeling safe and secure providing an emotional and physically safe environment is spoken of a total of 33 times in relation to trust (see Figure 17 Feeling Safe: reference frequency).

![Bar chart showing reference frequency of feeling safe]

Figure 17 Feeling Safe: reference frequency

Safety, particularly emotional safety, is exemplified by student Indigo, parent Adela, and staff member Cecil:

Feels good, safe like parents (student Indigo).

Well, to me, trust in a school environment, it’s like my kids. They come here and I trust the school to make sure that they’re safe and—it’s, well, caring for them I suppose (parent Adela).

It stems from relationships and I suppose I put trust, loyalty, and honesty—you need those things, and without trust you won’t take the risk which means you won’t improve. I mean, you’ve got to take risks and you’ll do things wrong or they won’t work out, then you work out

227
why they didn’t and so you do it better the next time and improve, but you’ve got to have that trust there to take it in the first place (staff Cecil).

Parents spoke mainly of a physically safe environment while staff spoke of an emotionally safe environment. Students spoke of the importance of keeping secrets and trust and the emotional security this gave them. A few students talked about bullying and possible physical threats to their safety. Castelfranchi and Falcone (2010) report that trust is also associated with risk. Three risk factors are described, “a) the risk of failure; b) the risk of wasting efforts and investments; and, the risk of unexpected harms” (p. 76). See section 2.4.2 Definitions of social trust for more details.

4.2.4.8 Feel of trust

The “feel of trust” was affirmed by 32 participants. Student Rebecca said:

It feels good when I’m in a trusting class...you feel cool, you feel good

(student Rebecca).

This feel good response to being trusted was spoken of by staff and parents 14 and 15 times respectively. Students mentioned it 3 times (see Figure 18 Feel of trust: reference frequency).
Linked with the feeling of emotional safety, members of the School recognise and value the benefits of the “trust feel”. Parent Poppy connects this feeling with trust. She applied her perception of the “trust feel” at the Vivaldi School to select that school for her children. Poppy explains:

I think that one of the first things is how people respond to you when you first walk into the school and if staff seem interested in you and your child, then that’s the first idea you get that you might perhaps trust them because they have an interest in you. But if you walk into a school and you’re left to your own whatever to find your way really to go without anyone responding. It doesn’t mean you don’t necessarily distrust the school but you’d have to say the feeling of trust isn’t quite there because you don’t know, for example, if you or your child are in need at the school whether they will respond as well as how you will like them to (parent Poppy).

Parents reported that staff took a great interest in individual children and families and as a result of this personal interest, parents believed that their child was safe at school. Parents could “feel” that their child was safe in the care of the school and no harm would come to their child. Parents often referred to “feel” and said that they used their perceptions to ascertain the level of care that the school provided, often on the first visit to the school.
4.2.4.9 Reciprocity

Reciprocity or believing in others to trust is spoken about in the trust literature as anticipating or eliciting others to trust. Ostrom and Walker (2003) subscribe to a wide definition of trust being, “the willingness to take some risk in relation to other individuals on the expectation that others will reciprocate” (p. 383). According to a beliefs-based model, it is argued that trust can be a conscious decision to decide to trust or not to (Castelfranchi & Falcone 2010, pp. 72–3). The collected data supports this reciprocity notion of trust: this concept was spoken about a total of 28 times with similar responses from the groups, students having the greatest say at 11 times (see Figure 19 Reciprocity: reference frequency (or believing in others).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Believing in others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19 Reciprocity: reference frequency (or believing in others)

It has been said that one has to give trust in order to receive it. A student describes the notion of reciprocity in terms of a conscious decision to trust or not to trust, based on their assessment of the situation. Student Leo said:

Sort of like believing in them and seeing what they’re like and if they look nice and stuff, might be able to trust them, yeah (student Leo).

Participants reported that people whom they trusted were people whom they believed in and were confident that their trust would be reciprocated. This created a “two way” process and appears to assist in the development of cooperation between pairs and small
groups of people. On the other hand, people who were not trusted were not afforded opportunities to be trusted or prove their trust.

4.2.4.10 Respect

*Respect* is one of the five values of the School Hand. However, in relation to trust, respect specifically, staff spoke 17 times, parents eight times, and students once (see Figure 20 Respect: reference frequency). Staff predominantly valued the respect of self and others. For this reason, it is an important element of trust. As Evelyn, a staff member said:

Also I think it’s helped me where people can come to me and trust me - to tell me something and say well, you know, this is really secretive and you have to respect that and that you don’t go and talk about it to other people. I think that’s where the trust comes in when somebody could come to you and maybe share some confidential and sad stuff - maybe not so good stuff - but they feel confident and they trust you enough to be able to give you that information (staff Evelyn).

![Respect: reference frequency](image)

Student Silas uses respect with trust, saying:

I think trust is about showing respect and not breaking secrets (student Silas).
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Participants referred to people who they respected as people whom they could trust. Trust and shared values, such as the School Hand, appears to associate trust with respect. This association may suggest that people who have similar values and share similar social norms are more likely to trust each than those others who do not share their common beliefs and behaviours.

4.2.4.11 Situated in context

Situated context of trust was not recognised by students. However, parents then staff spoke of this connection with trust (see Figure 21 Situated context: reference frequency). Participants reported that the degree to which they would trust another depended on the situation—either the time, place, person or a combination of these factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situated context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21 Situated context: reference frequency

Staff member Agnes and parent Harry comment:

It’s such a very diplomatic area isn’t it? But then people have their days. If someone’s having a bad day...I’ve always said you can’t trust someone 100 per cent. I said I can’t trust myself 100 per cent, because you’re having a bad day, you know. So I just think trusting people is a very hard thing to do. I will never trust someone 100 per cent (staff Agnes).
Although there’s also the trusting of yourself kind of thing. But I’ve always, I don’t know, maybe I’ve been a control...otherwise I would know how I’m going to respond in a situation and I sort of know my boundaries (parent Harry).

The data demonstrated that members of the Vivaldi School held expectations of others within certain situations. When these expectations are met, the degree of trustworthiness in a given situation is confirmed. Trust builds on trust: certainty and reliability, within the situation, supports further trust.

4.2.4.12 Flow

A Flow effect is spoken about by elite athletes where concentration is heightened and distractions minimised. Flow researcher Csikszentmihalyi (2000) describes as a “state of being...a total involvement of mind and body” (p. 99). All effort is concentrated on the same outcome and stopping to justify each step is not applied to the situation. When two or more people work in a flow they perform and achieve through a close working relationship: no barriers or blockers interfere. Staff made 11 references to flow, and parents 10.

Students did not raise flow. Staff members, Beatrice and Joy, comment:

It’s one of those feelings that human beings are very capable of doing, and it can lead to a lot of good feelings; productive and creative feelings within a group, within an organisation. That’s what I think trust is (staff Beatrice).

...she’s calm, relaxed, that sort of personality, everything just seems to flow. And you talk about things, and she’s got a great capacity for remembering. It just seems to flow on. You don’t have to keep going through it (staff Joy).
Participant reports about flow suggest that flow is both an outcome and an indicator of trusting relationships. When trust is present, individuals need not explain fine details of events. Rather, details are left unsaid with the knowledge that processes will proceed without stating all the details. Flow relationships are also indicative of a trusting relationship: mutual understandings are shared, despite limited discourse.

4.2.4.13 Compassion

*Compassion* is mentioned a total of 18 times, representing all of the stakeholders. Appreciation of this is expressed throughout as an enabling quality, such as emotionally supporting others—reducing anxiety through empathy. Compassion, says Killinger (2010) is “generously given, [to others] with no strings attached”. Altruism, on the other hand, can be motivated *solely* by self-interest (p. 37). Goleman (2006) says that “the difference between infant desire and adult, however, lies in the adult capacity for empathy, so that passion melds with compassion or at least caring” (p. 204). He goes on to say that “feeling cared for frees us to care for others—and when we don’t feel cared for, we can’t care nearly so well…simply making people more secure might boost their capacity for caring” (Goleman 2006, p. 213). Evidence presented by participants and the literature suggests that compassion is a quality that can contribute to trust by reducing anxiety and giving confidence to others. Student Mona and staff member Leo express their appreciation of compassion:

> Because they (teachers) help me when I’m sad and they take me up to the office when I’m hurt (student Mona).

> Helpful stuff in a helping out way with other people…then when you have trust also it’s like knowing that I trust you are considering the feelings of others...(staff member Leo).
The question here is, does making people feel secure through caring also provide capacity for trusting relationships? The data does suggest that compassion is interconnected with trustworthy relationships, Goleman (2006) supports this.

4.2.4.14 Faith

*Faith* is mentioned 14 times in the context of trusting and believing in others. It is more than a wish, it is an assurance that something good will happen.

> I have faith in them so...I guess, that faith is part of trust...To trust someone you have to have faith in them. Understanding that they will do or not do certain things and understand that they do or not do certain things and to do against you (staff Sarah).

Trust is expressed by Sarah as a reciprocal transitional relationship based on faith. Faith is associated with trust and does not necessarily have religious connotations in this study. Faith is synonymous with hope or belief that another will trust.

4.2.4.15 Time

*Time* was also mentioned 14 times as recognition that trust takes time to develop. Sometimes though, people immediately trust someone and time is not required. This appears to depend on a number of factors in the dynamic of trust. Time is one of these factors.

4.3 Grounded Theory

The analyses are presented in two clear steps: (a) Thematic convergence, and (b) Constructed vignettes. Thematic convergence applies a Grounded Theory approach to
further condense data with input from the participants as a theory building exercise. Vignettes are constructed from the data and with input from key participants to incorporate converging themes—three constructed vignettes represent converged concepts about trust in the Vivaldi School.

Through Charmaz’ (2006, p. 10) Grounded Theory process, as described in Chapter Three, participants and the researcher continued to refine and condense the emergent eight thematic categories. These coding categories are developed from the data, reflecting an inductive theory building approach, previously discussed. Results of this analysis are presented below (see Figure 22 Condensing pathway: Trust environments).

As well as the thematic convergence, details of experiences and responses are drawn from the data through a Grounded Theory process that enables a deeper inquiry into understanding the phenomena, trust in the School setting. Vignettes are developed from this data, and retain the integrity of participants’ encounters, the relevant relationships, and contexts. In order to protect the identity of participants, short narratives are constructed as vignettes to depict data and analysis. The Grounded Theory provides the methodological and theoretical framework to intensify the understanding of participants’ appreciation of trust in relation to school processes.

4.3.1 Grounded Theory: (a) Thematic convergence

Thematic convergence is defined as a Condensing pathway that enables readers to follow the data regression. This Condensing pathway shows the thematic names in the three condensing pathways. The arrows illustrate the theme’s origin and its destination. For example, in condensing pathway one, eight themes are merged into seven themes: “Feeling safe” is included in “Enhancing trust conditions”. In Condensing pathway two, seven
Results and Discussion

Themes are merged into five: “Governance” joins “Leadership” and “Wellbeing” joins “Relationships”. These merging processes are represented in Figure 22 Condensing pathway: Trust environments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condensing pathway one: Eight Themes</th>
<th>Condensing pathway two: Seven Themes</th>
<th>Condensing pathway three: Five Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Enhancing trust conditions</td>
<td>Enhancing trust conditions (Safe)</td>
<td>Enhancing trust conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Understanding trust</td>
<td>Understanding trust</td>
<td>Understanding trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Mistrust</td>
<td>Mistrust</td>
<td>Leadership (Governance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Mistrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Relationships</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Relationships (Wellbeing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Feeling safe</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Governance</td>
<td>Wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 22 Condensing pathway: Trust environments

Each of the five condensed themes are summarised below. A full explanation is provided in the previous section (4.2.3 Description of the eight condensed themes). They are presented in order of situated importance: Enhancing trust, Understanding trust, Leadership, Mistrust, and Relationships. In relation to the research questions, the higher the number of references, and the higher the importance to the participant and the researcher. However, a number of these themes have underpinning and shared assumptions. Significantly, the interrelated and interdependent nature of each category pertaining to the definition of trust has revealed a number of similarities and interconnections. These categories are not necessarily discrete units and further condensing is reported on soon (see 4.2.4 Thematic Analysis: (c) Deconstruction).
These results represent the participants’ definitions of trust and their understanding of how trust is constructed. It is noteworthy that, the five core themes are both the elements of trust as well as the outcomes of trust, and their position is dependent on the context.

1 **Enhancing trust conditions** (see 4.2.3.1 Enhancing trust conditions for more detail)

Enhancing trust conditions is a summary of the School conditions that support and encourage trust. These conditions are created by the staff and promote expectations of standards in behaviour and routines. These standards are behaviour based and when supported and enforced, promote confidence and reliability. Processes and attitudes which support these standards such as the School Hand, policy and procedures, and a feeling of physical and emotional safety, are embedded widely in the School culture. These and other regulations and benchmarks provide stability through regularity and predictability and these enhance trust. Trust conditions are foundations of trust in schools.

2 **Understanding trust** (see 4.2.3.2 Understanding trust for more detail)

The condensed theme of understanding trust represents participants’ understandings of trust. These are complex and many of these are reported in the literature. Through the deconstruction Thematic Analysis these 15 themes emerged: Reliability, Relationships, Integrity, Openness, Competence, Keep confidence, Feeling safe, Feel of trust, Reciprocity, Respect, Situated in context, Flow, Compassion, Faith, and Time. Reliability and Integrity form a dual relationship. Someone can be reliable but not act with integrity. Integrity requires context reliability: choosing the right action for the situation. As a result, the integrity category includes the reliability data. Similarly, keeping confidence and acting competently are subsets of integrity. Mutually satisfactory relationships—the types valued by the participants and the relational qualities aspired to—include respect and compassion. These relationships require situated faith (not religious faith, but hope and desire) and a
willingness to put trust in others, those within the relationship, as required. The condensed category of relationships includes categories of respect, compassion, faith and a belief in others. A feeling of an open and honest environment that encourages respectful and truthful conversations is recognised by a “good feeling”. An important indicator is also the recognition of a safe and secure feeling. These qualities are both indicators of a trustworthy environment as well as contributors to a trusting environment. The situation in which trust is recognised depends on the context and associated circumstances. This was spoken about and requires both a cognitive mindset that supports this as well as an inter-personal awareness of situations as they arise. The literature on leadership refers to this as a “sixth sense” or “radar”. The flow category was not described by the students; only staff and parents. It is also an indicator of a trust situation or experience in the School. When work is easy, no barriers are being blocked, and time appears to “stand still”, are descriptions of a flow. A fuller and more detailed description of each characteristic of trust is found in section 4.2.3 Description of the eight condensed themes.

3 **Leadership** (see 4.2.3.4 Leadership, and also 4.2.3.7 Governance)

School Leadership responsibilities are multiple and dynamic. The Principal is the link between the Government, Department of Education (DET) and the staff, students and parents. It is the responsibility of the Principal to implement directives of government and DET at the school level in the most appropriate manner that reflects the needs and characteristics of the School context. Research demonstrated positive links between school trust and improved academic outcomes (see section 2.5). School leaders who implement policy and procedures that support the day to day business of schools enhance trust. Students, staff, and parents see the Principal’s role as the most crucial role in the school: it is the foundation. Parents say they appreciate the complexity of fulfilling Government
directives while meeting the other School requirements. Parents recognise and affirm the positive tone that permeates from the Principal’s office through to the rest of the school.

4 **Mistrust** (see 4.2.3.3  Mistrust)

Mistrust incorporates negative cognitive and emotional experiences. Causes and results of mistrust are varied, however, a number of examples given may be decreased in the future. With a sound understanding of mistrust, school leaders are situated in a strong position to implement supportive and preventative strategies which actively minimise the occurrence and intensity of events explored in this theme. Mistrust cannot be eradicated, but, its occurrence can be minimised.

5 **Relationships** (see 4.2.4.2  Relationships, and also 4.2.3.8  Wellbeing)

Relationships represent the many social networks and experiences within the school context. Multiple positive interactions are reported and these validate individual and group identity and wellbeing. Feeling good supports trust and is also an indicator of trustworthy relationships. Participants detail emotional safety needs being met by positive relationships and their connections with these secure experiences with learning. Feelings of happiness are associated with emotional safety as expressed by staff, students and parents. Participants build relationships formally and informally and well developed trusting relationships “smooth over” difficult conversations. Relationships are like trust—they are the oil that lubricates the school.

Figure 23 Condensing to five themes representing a trusting school environment shows the results of condensing phase three to five main themes. The frequency of responses is represented in light grey and the number of sources or participants is shown in dark grey.
Enhancing conditions was the most recorded theme, closely followed by Understanding trust. Relationships are the least reported theme with 178 responses.

Figure 23 **Condensing to five themes representing a trusting school environment**

An examination of the frequency of each stakeholder group’s response to each theme is shown below in Figure 24 Results of the sum of references per theme made by participants. The summary of references per stakeholders shows an emerging theme in this study: both adult groups (staff and parents) tend to respond with similar frequencies, but the group of students tend to respond less. It is worth remembering that this is further compounded by the fact that the student cohort is less and that the interviews were much shorter. The total condensed themes are represented in dark grey, parents in a medium grey, staff in a light grey, and students in a strong grey. In the first two themes, Enhancing conditions and Understanding trust, the distribution of participant comments are similar. Leadership has 16 more comments in the staff group than parents. This gap widens in the next theme of Mistrust with a variation between staff and parents of 40. This difference is not seen in the relationships with adult responses almost equal and once again, student responses disproportionately reduced.
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

Figure 24 Results of the sum of references per theme made by participants

As reported in Step One, Thematic Analysis, (c) Deconstruction, the five most spoken about categories of Understanding Trust are Integrity and reliability, Relationships, Open and safe, Situated context, and Flow. The significance, in terms of the number of references made by participants, is shown in Figure 25 Condensed Understanding of trust. These results are a consequence of merging some of these themes into a closer and more descriptive model of the Understanding Trust as shown below. The first three themes, Integrity and Reliability, Relationships and Open and Safe, are articulated by the participants as important aspects of trust (see section 1.6.5 Chapter 5: Summary, conclusion and implications).
Results from the student participants show that the conditions that enhance trust, such as the Hand, are the most significant aspect of the school that encourages and contributes to the construction of trust. Leadership, such as that indicated by being available outside of class time to talk to, is appreciated by the students. Feeling physically and emotionally safe and secure is a very high priority for the students, scoring remarkably highly compared to scores from the staff and parents. Mistrust scored more highly than leadership which is against the overall trend data of this particular analysis. Emotional bullying is reflected in this theme. Supportive school leaders and friends are sustaining elements (see Figure 26 Student data about how the school constructs trust).

Figure 25 Condensed Understanding of trust

4.3.1.1 Students

Figure 26 Student data about how the school constructs trust
4.3.1.2 Staff

The staff’s data profile on factors which enhance trust in the school are represented in Figure 27. Staff data showing how the school constructs trust. These results reflect the mean of all case study participants, in order of importance.

![Staff data showing how the school constructs trust](image)

4.3.1.3 Parents

The parent data demonstrates, in comparison to that of the staff, an increased appreciation of supportive structures and processes in the school and less emphasis on leadership. However, these results are not significant as there are interdependent relationships between the two categories. Parents’ emphasis on relationships outweighs mistrust which is rated at a considerably lower level than staff’s responses, but higher than students.

As a result of applying Grounded Theory techniques, four thematic categories are identified as key contributors to constructing trust in the School: distrust, outcomes of trusting environment, Understanding trust and preconditions of trusting environment. Figure 28 Parent data showing how the school constructs trust, details the results of this Grounded Theory process.
4.3.2 Grounded Theory: (b) Construction of vignettes

Step Two of the analysis further refines the themes identified in Step One in order to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience spoken about by the participants. Drawing on Charmaz (2006, 2011), the Grounded Theory process supports a cyclic and reflective process with the participants that enables a deeper inquiry into understanding the phenomenon—trust in the School setting.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 81) assert that vignettes are a suitable structure that supports “formulating core issues—your theory of what is happening”. Using the participants’ data, core themes are applied to draw out the major themes and relationships. The vignettes retain the integrity of participants’ encounters, the relevant relationships, and contexts. The design of vignettes in collaboration with Grounded Theory provides an opportunity to intensify the understanding of participants’ appreciation of trust and how the School trust environments are created. Vignettes that “ask readers to relive the experience through the writer’s or performer’s eyes” assist with meaning making (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 905). Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2001, p. 361) supported this in their advocacy of the inclusion of “evocative field notes” in research accounts.
Specifically, Step Two entails Thematic Analysis of the school members’ understanding of how the school enhances trust—a process of which they are a part—their understanding of trust, how relationships are intertwined with trust, and how leadership impacts on this context in an attempt to achieve the outcomes while minimising mistrust.

In the first instance, Grounded Theory-informed vignettes were used to retell situations that reflected natural setting experiences between participants and the participant researcher. The vignettes are developed through the lens of the Grounded Theory Thematic Analysis as well as by applying interview transcript data to exemplify a grounded theme. Each vignette provides a synthesised representation of each grounded theme, or an experience that embodies the grounded theme in a way that is true to that individual and their contexts.

The vignettes, as described in Chapter Three, are constructed from the condensed data while applying Grounded Theory techniques. The vignettes are based on interview data and real experiences between the participants and the participant researcher. The emphasis is placed on the interaction, not the outcomes themselves. Verification took place through the Grounded Theory process.

Vignettes born out of narrative literature provide a participant’s summary of an interaction within the inquiry into trust, details of which follow in the discussion section. Miles and Huberman describe a vignette as “a narrative, storylike structure that preserves chronological flow and the normally is limited to a brief time span, to one or a few key actors, to a bounded space, or all three” (1994, p. 81). Vignettes are a result of the synthesised data analysis and are presented as abstractions with an interpretative perspective showing aspects of the generated grounded themes: Enhancing trust
(conditions, safe); Understanding trust; Leadership (governance); Mistrust; and Relationships (wellbeing).

Three vignettes are presented: one each from a student, parent, and teacher perspective. They reflect the day to day experiences encountered within the School. They portray the interplay school staff have with situations and some of the thinking required in decision-making and the consequences regarding these situations. Applying the Leader’s Framework for Decision Making (Snowden & Boone 2007) provides an objective method of decision-making and fits with the school context (see Appendix 6).

4.3.2.1 Vignette One: Student perspective

“My Teacher helped me, I trust her”

“What’s up Rex, where’s your smile?” asked his mother.

“I like my new school but something happened today Mum. I feel sad” answered Rex in a barely audible voice.

“Oh tell me about that, when did it happen, are you OK?” asked his mother.

“Well, things aren’t going too well at my new school...?” whispered Rex.

“Tell me about it, how did it start?” inquired his mother.

“Well, there is this kid at school, he is sort of mean, all the kids like him but he doesn’t like me...He eyeballs me...I’m scared, he wants to bash me”...[Rex starts to cry.].

“Come now, I am sure we can fix this, I’ll talk to your teacher in the morning” reassured Rex’s mother.

Rex became very agitated by this suggestion, insisting that his teacher not be told of the bullying. However, after much persuasion, and talking through more
detail about the bullying experience, Rex agreed that his mum can talk to his
Teacher. He is reassured that his mum will insist that Rex’s identity is not
disclosed to the bully.

Rex’s Teacher was very concerned by the story and reassured Rex’s mother that
she would manage the situation at the class level and the complaint was kept
confidential. She was confident that the intervention would work. She had a
strong relationship with the boy that Rex felt intimidated by and had prior
experience with resolving similar situations.

That very day, Rex’s Teacher worked with the class, using the familiar Tribes
class meeting approach to raise issues of harassment, and methods students
can apply to dispel these advances. The Teacher presented bullying scenarios
and the students discussed and participated in role plays to reinforce a
collective understanding of solutions to bullying. Rex and the “bully”
participated in these activities.

That afternoon Rex reported the resolution to his Mother, saying that the class
meeting was very “cool” and the problem with the bully had been resolved. He
said, “My Teacher helped me, I trust her”.

This story demonstrates how important communication between parents and children is.
Through the initial conversation between Rex and his mother, his anxieties were heard and
a possible solution was commenced. Without this, the bullying is likely to intensify and
Rex’s response is possible emotional withdrawal from his new peer group and possible
physical retaliation when the frustration peaked. Equally, the Teacher created a rapport
with Rex’s mother that gave her the impression that she could report the bullying and feel confident that her feelings would be validated and the matter would be dealt with in a respectful, appropriate, professional manner. The Teacher demonstrated her willingness to be open to the parent’s concern. She made time to listen without dismissing Rex’s concerns. The Teacher also had the competency to deal with the issue and resolve it before it intensified. In this vignette, based on the data, the interaction and experience held by all three participants revealed many of the themes on trust.

This story crystallises the good work done by Teachers every day as they perform their duties. This teacher is not only a Teacher of the curriculum, but a confident, grounded practitioner of emotional intelligence and a skilled facilitator of resolutions. She scans her environment for opportunities to enhance learning by building trust. When pockets of conflict present, sometimes even before the class is aware, she institutes approaches to restore harmony. All of these qualities, however, are difficult to quantify and sequence into a linear event. Many aspects are interrelated and often the potential outcomes are unknown when one embarks on these approaches. The Teacher’s willingness to be open and reciprocal to the environment cues and reports from parents, results in her initiating responses that support individuals and the collective to maintain and grow trust. Another quality the Teacher displays is her optimistic faith and trust that solutions will unfold. She applies her experience of success and failures and has the confidence to risk-take to achieve positive outcomes.

Situated with an experienced Teacher—the students, parents, and staff hold this teacher in high regard—she is a role model. Her teaching practice is exemplary. The students interviewed confirm their feelings of emotional safety and their preparedness to take risks for learning. Given this summary, she is aware of emerging and repeated patterns with
students, in this case relationship development and threats made to “newcomers”, such as Rex. She understands many of the causes and effects of concerns associated with children of Rex’s age and looks for the early emerging patterns with the intent to prevent harm by circumventing problem behaviours as soon as they arise and so prevent negative patterns developing. Sometimes events do not always go to plan. However, this experienced Teacher recognises these patterns and changes her behaviour as required. Applying the Leader’s Framework for Decision Making (Snowden & Boone 2007), as discussed in Chapter Two, see section 2.2.4 Principals’ influence on learning outcomes, the Teacher makes professional decisions in which the student’s dignity is maintained and a successful resolution is found.

In referring to the Decision Making Framework, (see Appendix 6) the Teacher selects the best practice; one that is tried and proven to work when a child feels threatened by another. She has a process that works: the students are familiar with the class meeting—the frame for her intervention—and as a result her facilitation requires considered effort. Students have segments delegated to them and the process is primarily student driven. She is still on alert, concentrating through the class meeting and looking for any sign that might indicate that events are changing; experience tells her that there is no room for complacency. Considering the four possible dimensions of the Framework, this event is managed at the simple level. Paradoxically, however, it is the complexity of experience and awareness of possible unfolding patterns that enabled this Teacher to successfully select the most situated leadership processes with her students that resulted in success. Experience told her that the bullying was a cause and effect scenario and she had the skills to resolve it. On the other hand, a Teacher without experience—the “known knowns”, as Snowden and Boone (2007) posit—would not have the experience that would support cause and effect problem-solving and as a result, may require another approach.
Alternatively, mentoring from an experienced teacher would possibly assist. The forthcoming vignettes will provide more insight into this Framework.

4.3.2.2 Vignette Two: Parent perspective

*How to trust when safety is questioned?*

“What is going on here! I can’t believe it, where’s the fence!? I didn’t notice before...how can you have a school without a fence?”, shouted Fred as he rushed into the School reception area.

Fred, a new parent from Sydney, enrolled his two children at the School in the holidays. Today was the first day that he had dropped his children off. Julia, their mother, had settled them into their new school. She had started her new job with the Australian Defence Force, and now Fred commences his “home dad” role. He firmly felt this responsibility. He had supported Julia through the training and now their long term plan was coming to fruition. Her first job in a new town was finally a reality! At last, the family will have a regular income and all the trimmings this brings.

Fred wasn’t that sure how well he would manage this new role of home dad. He asked himself, how would he manage when Julia goes overseas to Iraq? He pushed those thoughts aside and went back to his immediate threat, his children’s safety.

The Principal heard the commotion in the front office: she went into crisis management. She knew that word about the fence would spread like ‘wild fire’.
Other parents would be anxious: many think the School needs a fence, but they
don’t say it. It comes through surveys, but not as a day to day occurrence.

Fred was ushered into her office, well away from prying eyes and eaves-
droppers. “Now what’s the problem Fred? How can I help you?” the Principal
inquired.

“It’s the fence, Julie didn’t tell me…and I didn’t notice last week,” Fred insisted.
[Fred’s voice rising, face looking flushed, anxious.]

“Yes, some people comment, particularly people from South. It’s different down
there. Many of the schools up here don’t have fences, it’s not a requirement.
We are lucky really, we have no problems, and the neighbourhood use our
attractive school grounds after hours for soccer and other recreational
activities”, she explained.

“Do you have members of the public come into the school?” asked Fred.

“Well, it has not been an issue. Sometimes local residents cut the corner as they
make their way to the shops. But no, it is not an issue. We always have
teachers on duty supervising students. On the odd occasion we have itinerants
sit under the banyan tree in the corner. The students report this and a staff
member asks them to move on. There are never any issues, people are very
supportive of our school. I think this is possibly because we all see the school as
a community resource and the local residents appreciate this”, explained the
Principal.
The Principal wonders if this fence issue will ever go away? More recently, the increased number of interstate and international families means that this issue is being raised more often. Safety as a factor of trust is emerging in the research data: how can this be progressed? However, the Principal recognises that the media publish news stories on a weekly basis depicting the vulnerability of children and the alleged increase in abductions.

This is a story of managing an anxious parent. On the face of it, it seems simple enough. In the parent’s mind there is a link between cause and effect—no fence means his children are at risk of an outside threat. How can he trust the school? From the parent’s perspective, there is no mystery—schools should have fences. The Principal’s role, in Fred’s mind, is to see the cause and effect relationships and respond, such as by the action of erecting a fence around the school. By contrast, Snowden and Boone (2007) caution leaders to challenge their beliefs and recognise that success in managing or avoiding issues can sometimes lead to complacency and other issues are not considered. In this case, the Principal mentally draws on data. She confirms in her mind that there is no data that support causation of student harm with or without fences. Another thought the Principal has is the impact a fence will have on the surrounding community—residents, neighbours, and sporting groups. She asks herself, “How will they access the school after hours if a fence is erected?” Another data seeking thought connects low vandalism with no fence with community pride and she wonders if there is a causal link here?

Considering Snowden and Boone’s (2007) decision Framework, the next activity is to consider if this problem is Simple, Complicated, Complex or Chaotic. Cause and effect relationships (referred to as known knowns) are characteristic of Simple and Complicated
domains. These relationships are obvious to everyone in Simple or require investigation for Complicated (Known unknowns). Repeated patterns and consistent events typify this fact based management. Communication in clear, direct ways, reinforcing proper processes in place, and delegation of known events denote Simple domain Characteristics. On the other hand, a Complicated approach reflects a fact-based management style, drawing on expert diagnosis and listening to conflicting advice.

In the case of the fence issue, the next question based on the Framework is, are the unknowns known? If they are, who are the experts so that their advice can be accessed? These answers are not apparent in the first two domains. We turn to the Complex and the Chaotic.

The Complex domain depicts unpredictability, instability, and fluctuating responses. There are no apparent right answers—many competing ideas and only emergent instructive patterns are evident. In summary, the irregularity is difficult to define with the unknowns remaining unknown. Creative and innovative approaches are required to work through Complex issues. The leadership approach required is one that probes, senses, responds. Levels of interaction and communication between people must be increased to generate ideas, and create environments and experiments that allow patterns to emerge. These approaches, according to Snowden and Boone (2007) help facilitate the required dissent and diversity while managing starting conditions and monitoring for emergence (see Appendix 6).

By contrast, a Chaotic context is characterised by a shifting between cause and effect relationship, “no manageable patterns exist—only turbulence. This is the realm of unknowables. The events of September 11, 2001, fall into this category” (Snowden & Boone 2007).
2007, p. 5). The immediate leadership position is to act to stabilise the situation and transform Chaos into Complexity. Communication is the most effective means to achieve this (Snowden & Boone 2007). In the case of the fence, the decision making approach does not reflect the Chaos description but does accord with the Complex domain.

The leadership approach is not to revert to previous methods and look for facts because the facts about the fence do not help. The parents who want a fence do not support these facts and to continue along these lines of logic will possibly polarise the community: into those for the fence and those against a fence. The authors of the Framework advise not to rush and “solve the problem without exploring the opportunities”. This approach appears to require the involvement of the School parent group and is between fence supporters and non-fence supporters. The most suitable approach for Complicated issues, according to Snowden and Boone, is to allow adequate time for reflection and patterns to emerge that will help develop a resolution; in this case, to improve the parent’s perception of School safety.

It was decided by the Principal to approach this safety issue as a complex problem and establish a Safety Committee through School Council to explore the options. This elongated approach is identifying emerging patterns. Consensus is converging. There are no agreed resolutions but there is considerable improvement to wider safety issues pertaining to the school grounds. There was no “safety problem”, however, the collaborative approach between parents and staff, over time meant that School improvement was made and parent’s vulnerabilities were reduced. A similar result was found in a large school trust study:

building parent trust depends on bridging the relational gap between parents and schools that heighten perceived vulnerabilities and risks. The salience of
vulnerability and risk is greatest when knowledge of another role group’s
behaviour is scarce. Conditions that facilitate parent collaboration and student
identification with school communicate the healthy intentions of school
authorities (Adams et al.. 2009, p. 29).

4.3.2.3 Vignette Three: Staff perspective

Walking the tightrope of School improvement: You mean you don’t value my practice?

“What’s going on? I have done it this way for years! Who do they think they
are? I don’t trust this place any more. I feel confused and angry. I know we
should change but I am not sure about the changes...I am just not sure”,
thought Betty [monologue].

“Well, I am not sure if I will stick around here much longer. There is too much
change, it was better before when the leaders kept changing, they never had
time to see what we’re doing...but now, the accountability is huge. Gosh, when
will it all stop? Well I think I should be supported to run my program the way it
is expressed in my teaching philosophy...not that I have changed it since I left
Uni. I mean, my way works, I know it does, but now we have to follow the
whole school approach of First Steps Writing. That’s heaps of work, and
frankly, the kids in my class are way harder to teach than they used to be...I’ve
got three Special Needs kids in my class and 3 ESL kids, how can I teach them
too?”, reflected Betty.

“They [School Leadership] said that they would help, observe my class and give
feedback. Mmm, that sounds a good idea, but then they will know that I am
not using the First Steps processes we learnt about in the whole day PD
This monologue represents a number of staff who expressed emotional and professional pressure as a result of the increasing expectation, from the Department of Education, the School Leadership, and the changing clientele. These new expectations are focused on incremental improvement in student measurable outcome data as opposed to an emphasis on the “whole child” that de emphasises academic performance data. The School implemented an explicit school improvement change process supported by a collaboratively developed Strategic Plan. All staff supported the proposal that First Steps teacher support material will provide the theoretical and practical structure of Literacy teaching and learning. From the beginning of this process, the School Leadership intention is always to provide a supportive and trusting school environment. However, the data revealed that not all staff viewed the change process as supportive.

Considering the Leader’s Framework for Decision Making —see Appendix 6—the initial assessment may be that the problem expressed by the Teacher in her monologue is associated with the School Improvement and is in the Simple frame. From the Department of Education’s point of view, the School Leadership are leading the required whole school change to improve Literacy outcomes. Cause and effect is established through the need to improve outcomes, based on Literacy data, and the PD provided the solution. The Teacher’s responsibility is to implement the Literacy program, and many did. Follow-up meetings
provided additional interactive communication about the change but according to the framework this was not required. Some staff approached it in a positive Simple manner, notwithstanding that ongoing commitment to learning the new program was required. However, some staff had a different perspective and perhaps their learning theory to a whole school approach interfered with the application of the PD. One of the consequences of adopting a whole school approach is that deviations and omissions to the program are identified and this has ramifications for accountability. However, there is still an enormous scope for creativity when using First Steps. It is not a syllabus that has lesson plans. Rather, it is a pedagogical framework that is grounded in learning theory and recommends a suite of activities based on the developmental needs of the students. The diagnostic approach fits with the Frameworks cause and effect Simple approach, once the program is understood and learnt. Depending on the perspective, the feedback is different. Given, however, that the Framework is intended from an improvement perspective, the emphasis in this case is on the implementation at the whole school level. Given this, Simple does not reflect enough of the issues. The Complicated frame is based on management, when the unknowns are known. Implementing Cause-and-effect relationships discoverable but not immediately apparent to everyone—there is more than one right answer. Creative solutions may be found with this approach and collective responsibility may be a by-product.

Considering the Complex frame, unrest is unpredictable, the emerging unknowns are unknown. While the First Steps program is very explicit, the rate and pace of implementation is not. Permission for creative and innovative approaches is required and this is not evidenced in the data as a supported approach by School Leadership. While interaction and communication is always encouraged, the challenge for teachers is finding time for this interaction. Open forums during staff meetings were partially successful. Some
individuals lacked confidence to share and some staff implementation of the program in their classroom was minimal. There were successes and these are celebrated and encouraged. Dissent and diversity of opinions and methods was minimally encouraged.

The Complex dimension of the model identifies areas of caution when solving problems of this magnitude: resist the temptation to fall back into habitual, command-and-control mode, and to look for facts rather than allow patterns to emerge according to Snowden and Boone (2007). Increased pressure to see accelerated program implementation means that the conditions are not ideal for implementation to occur. Patience and reflection time are required in order to enact the 15 elements of trust (see 4.2.4 Thematic Analysis: (c)

Deconstruction

4.3.2.4 Summary Grounded Theory-informed vignettes

Grounded Theory-informed vignettes are used to retell three situations that reflect natural setting experiences between participants and the participant researcher. These vignettes are developed through the lens of the Grounded Theory Thematic Analysis as well as applying some interview transcript data to a narrative construct to exemplify a grounded theme while protecting the identity of the participants. Each vignette provides a synthesised representation of each grounded theme, an experience that embodies the grounded theme in a way that is true to that individual and their contexts. They are a result of the synthesised data analysis and are presented as abstractions with an interpretative perspective.

Following these three vignettes is a summary of a synthesis of their findings.

The four issues, based on the data are:
• Intense change processes with a dramatic shift in expectation of PD implementation into all classrooms;

• Pressures on the perceived high capacity of learning required of all teachers;

• Professional accountability increased due to the relative stability of the School Leadership; and

• A perception that divergent approaches to individual’s problem-solving and scaffolding new learning by staff and students are not always supported by School Leadership and this has a counter outcome of invalidating some staff’s implementation of learning—resulting in low trust.

Building and maintaining a learning community in which stakeholders—students, staff and parents—are supported by the School Leadership and each other through supportive means that reduce vulnerabilities ultimately presents as a core ingredient of trust and school improvement. Attitudes and practices of inclusion, respect, and relationship building assist staff and parents in meeting the educational and emotional needs of students.

4.3.2.5 Summary Grounded Theory

These summarised converged themes are reported in order of their importance:

Enhancing trust is supported through School conditions that expect a standard of behaviour that promotes confidence and reliability. Processes and attitudes which support these standards such as the School Hand, policy and procedures, and a feeling of physical and emotional safety are embedded widely in the School culture. These and other regulations provide stability and predictability, which enhances trust.

Understanding trust represents participants’ perceptions of trust. These 15 concepts are listed in order of importance: Reliability, Relationships, Integrity, Openness, Competence,
Keeping confidence, feeling safe, Feel of trust, Reciprocity, Respect, Situated context, Flow, Compassion, Faith, and Time. These key attributes define trust to the Vivaldi School community.

**Leadership** refers to the responsibilities and actions of School leaders, in particular the Principal, in facilitating an effective School. Parents see the Principal’s role as the most crucial role in the school: it’s the foundation, that is, the starting point, because the Principal influences everything in respect of policy, Council, parents, students, and the staff. She is the link between the Department of Education (DET) and staff, students and parents.

**Mistrust** in its mild form is a lack of trust or confidence with current or future experiences and feelings of doubt and uncertainty. More intense forms are distrust and are couched within tense cognitive suspicion. Breaking of confidence, such as secrets told by children, and a lack of confidence in professional risk-taking, were some of the examples provided in the data. Some staff responded to the parents’ mistrust of the School Leadership team from a personal point of view and not from an organisational standpoint. While there were only a few disclosures, the data analysed revealed how the personal and professional self-doubt expressed by staff was generated from the organisational leadership in relation to school improvement. These provocations can be summarised around change management central to the school improvement agenda: leadership support not meeting teachers’ individual needs, leadership’s expectations not matching some individual’s professional identity, and the rate of change being too fast which resulted in some people feeling “done to” and not in control.

**Relationships** cut through all aspects of interaction at the Vivaldi School. Throughout the data from all stakeholders, the connection between trust and positive relationships is well
documented: connecting with others in supportive ways provides opportunities to build trust and apply trust. Associations between friends, classmates, colleagues, and student–teacher, parent–teacher, teacher–teacher relationships, are vast, varied, and interconnected. Relationships help build understanding, empathy, and bond people emotionally. This theme recognises the importance of positive emotions. Negative emotions and experiences are discussed in the themes of mistrust. The concept of relationship is arguably a core component of being human. This core element forms diverse methods from culture to culture as well as permeating cross-cultural boundaries that drives humans to connect. Formal and informal gatherings help build vital understandings through relationships. This finding supports Kochanek’s (2005, p. 83) research that argues that trust is developed in schools through making people feel at ease.

Each stakeholder group is represented by a vignette and a situation that typifies trust in the School. The voice of the Principal is also represented. The summary of the three vignettes follow:

- **Vignette One** “My Teacher helped me, I trust her” (4.3.2.1 Vignette One: Student perspective) is told from a student’s perspective and shows that School conditions that support open communication advance trust. The Teacher is a grounded practitioner of emotional intelligence and a skilled facilitator of resolutions. She recognises the cause and effect “simple” (Snowden & Boone 2007) problem unfolding and applies an appropriate process with a successful outcome.

- **Vignette Two** “How to trust when safety is questioned?” (4.3.2.2 Vignette Two: Parent perspective) anxiety regarding a perception that the lack of a school fence equated with lack of safety is presented from a parent’s point of view. A “complex” problem (Snowden & Boone 2007) in which time was strategically afforded to
reduce vulnerability and develop a collective approach to perceived safety issues—some of which are not related to the original lack of fence concern. Unexpected positive outcomes emerged through the problem-solving process.

- **Vignette Three:** “Staff perspective Walking the tightrope of School improvement: You mean you don’t value my practice?” (4.3.2.3 Vignette Three: Staff perspective).

  School improvement can challenge teacher autonomy and longstanding School norms giving rise to heightened teacher vulnerability. Affording teachers’ time as well as engaging them in the change process helps validate their professionalism and thus reduces anxiety.

Through the data analysis process, two research sub questions have emerged:

- What is the relationship between trust, leadership, and school improvement?
- What are the responsibilities and actions of leaders that facilitate trust?

While holding in mind the condensed themes formed from elements of a trusting school and the participants’ understandings of trust, as well as the findings from the Grounded Theory analysis, the upcoming section reports on Step Three: data analysis results. Membership Categorisation provides further analysis of the data from a different perspective and this contributes to the significant findings on trust in the Vivaldi School.

### 4.4 Membership Category Analysis

As described in detail in Chapter Three, theoretical assumptions about the Membership Categorisation Device (MCD) analysis follows the Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis (CA) line of inquiry, where cultural systems are not viewed as external structures, but as a construct which is evoked by participants during interaction. The theoretical
principles of ethnomethodology that guided the analysis of the data are based on everyday language in which the understanding is publicly displayed. The analysis of talk-in-interaction is an interactional accomplishment of the participants. The meaning of everyday discourse is situated in context, such as time and place. Through the analysis process, concepts about trust are uncovered and described. The analyses also reveal ways in which “social order is ongoingly produced, and more recognisable in and through the practical actions of the members of society” (Psathas 1995, p. 66).

4.4.1. Parents

The sequences of eleven extracts are obtained from the larger parent interviews’ transcript in which the recorded conversations between individual parents and the researcher are stored. Extracts from this large transcript are made on the basis of sourcing evidence that demonstrated the emerged SRP that made up the MCD on trust. There were copious examples. However, due to thesis length restrictions, only exemplars have been selected to demonstrate the findings.

In relation to the forthcoming transcripts, the parent and researcher turns are denoted by the parents’ unique identification number. The researcher is denoted as “Interviewer”. Further details of conversation transcriptions are found in the “Conversation Transcription Conventions” (see Appendix 5). The five extracts are first presented by way of brief introductions which identify the context of the example. This is followed by a commentary at the end of the extract. The five key examples for SRP parent–staff are presented in the order of frequency spoken about during the parent–researcher interviews.

Following the MCD analyses of the data, the following five SRPs were identified: parent–staff (professional role), parent–staff (relationship), parent–staff (reliability), parent–staff
(open), and parent–staff (safe). It is worth noting that the numbers against categories are a report of their frequency during a finite recorded interview. These numbers are not presented to exclusively organise the level of importance and will be examined along with a transcript excerpt and commentary of each pair that contribute to form the “family” of MCD trust and will be explained individually below (Figure 29 SRPs of the MCD of trust spoken by parents).

![Bar chart showing frequency of SRPs and 'trust'

- Professional role: 240
- Relationships: 233
- Reliability: 135
- Openness: 113
- Safe: 62

Figure 29 SRPs of the MCD of trust spoken by parents

4.4.1.1 SRP parent–staff (professional role)

Drawing on the literature regarding institutional talk (Heritage 2004), analysis of the parent data used through applying MCD methods, revealed three professional SRPs that were included in the School’s trust family. The most frequent category mentioned (248 times) was the teachers. Approximately half of all references to teachers were not in relation to the MCD trust. The Principal was mentioned 102 times, predominantly in relation to trust and the professional role expected to ensure a trusting school environment. This indicates that, overall, content relating to trust was similar comparing the teacher and Principal role. The Assistant Principal was spoken about in the same manner as the Principal and was mentioned 6 times. The Assistant Principal’s role is referred within the Principal’s role—Principal and Assistant Principal roles are synonymous—both working together to achieve
the same outcomes. The results are shown in the chart in Figure 30 Professional SRPs spoken about.

![Bar chart showing the number of times Assistant Principal, Principal, and Teachers were mentioned.]

**Figure 30 Professional SRPs spoken about**

Transcripts are examples of the identified professional MCDs and SRPs as revealed by the parents during the semi-structured interviews.

**Transcript extract 1: “The principal is the parent”**

1. Parent 7: The principal is the parent. The principal is the parent of the school community and is therefore at the pointy end of the arrow. The arrow is heading in a certain direction with the principal at the front. The short answer, the principal is fully responsible and the deputy and everyone down the line. The principal ultimately has final control over where that arrow is going to go and everyone that follows behind that point. So yes, the principal has a huge and deputy head and everyone else along the line. They have a huge responsibility to build our trust and control that trust and to keep it going, to keep it flowing and keep the confidence up and keep the smiles on the faces. To keep it fun. Now I know that that takes a huge amount of time and effort to do but it’s done nonetheless because again, we have the balance. You are here to look after the staff and the teachers, the teachers are here to look after the children and their learning and it just goes down the line.
Transcript one illustrates that trust binds leadership and good outcomes together as a category bound connection between the Principal and trust: An SRP of professional—trust. This confirms the view that trust is created by the actions of people in leadership roles (the Principal). Parent seven perceives that the Principal and Deputy have an enormous responsibility to construct trust and “to keep it going, to keep it flowing and the confidence up”. If School Leaders are unable to build and maintain confidence with the school stakeholders, then the Principal and Deputy would be deemed not trusty.

Transcript extract 2: “They create it.”

1. Interviewer: How do the various people in positions of authority at school influence a trusting environment?

2. Parent 6: They create it. I think their style. I’d say it becomes a personal [qualities; very nurturing and quite comfortable with children]...We feel that we can come in and—you were just saying the other day about trying to assist the family although it’s not school related and really has no impact on how the school is run, a part of what you do is you make the family feel that you’re caring for their—and people need that...there is no agenda. The trust at the moment is that you have the best interests of the school. That’s the first thing that we think of when we think, you know, the Principal, (.) she’s got the best interests of the school as opposed to we don’t feel that, and I say we because we all gossip and talk about it, but I feel myself that as opposed to your own personal agenda, and that’s very important. I guess we have to pass the trust for that period of time in the day that we need to feel confident that that’s the priority within the school.
Transcript extract 2 illustrates the parent’s category bound connection between the School Leadership and trust: An SRP of professional–trust. Parent 16 confirms the view that trust is created by the deliberate actions of people leadership roles (the Principal).

Transcript extract 3: “It starts from the top really”

1. Interviewer: Tell me about that. How does the school do that [welcomes and values, parents, what parents have to say]?

2. Parent 16: It makes the best effort to communicate with parents whether that’s in writing or verbally. It welcomes parents into the school. It has a deliberate policy of encouraging parents to come into the school, to go into classes. To talk...I think it starts from the top really. It’s talking, it’s being able to take anything to the Principal and the Assistant Principal and see that it will be acted on.

3. Interviewer: And this sort of environment you’re talking about, is there a feel to it?

4. Parent 16: Oh yeah, it’s a good feel, it’s a productive feel. It will happen in a school where things are working. (.) If things aren’t working in the school then the feel isn’t there and you tend to feel a bit distant and removed from it I think.

Parents recognised that the Principal has an obligation to establish a welcoming school, one in which the vulnerabilities of individuals are reduced. Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that synchrony of School roles contributed to mutual expectations and obligations. When, however, these expectations are not met or are inconsistent, “many parents are likely to withhold support” (p. 21). Their theory overview of relational trust, in relation to mutual
obligations is alluded to in turn four: “things aren’t working in the school then the feel isn’t there and you tend to feel a bit distant and removed from it”.

4.4.1.2 SRP parent–staff (relationship)

Within the rights and obligations of parent–staff (relationships) there are a number of dimensions identified: communication and relationships. There are two transcripts to demonstrate these qualities.

The first parent–staff SRP pertaining to communication includes the reciprocal relationship with listening and is included in the analysis. Listen was uttered 41 times and communicate 55 times, totalling 96 occurrences.

Transcript extract 4: “It manifests itself in terms of the positive communication”

1  Interviewer: You’re giving a really good sense of your deep understanding. I was wondering what does this three way commitment actually look like in a school setting?

2  Parent 18: I think it manifests itself in terms of the positive communication three ways. Like trust is an ongoing commitment that’s built on and that means reinforcing the positives, so from the school back to the child back to the parents is that communication of the good things that are happening, not communication only occurring when things go wrong I think is very important in terms of building that trust.

Obviously from a parent’s point of view again participating in school life is a sign of building that commitment and that feeling of trust in the community and not just coming to school when there’s a problem. I think from the child’s point of view as well I think it’s really important to set ongoing positive
communication as well as the negative stuff. I think that’s the way that I see that. It’s about positive communication and that way you build that trust and that commitment.

Parent 18 makes the link in turn 2 with the Interviewer’s question about communication and trust. This is a good example of Tschanen-Moran’s paradox of trust (2004, p. 15). That is, trust is both a “glue and a lubricant”. The “glue” metaphor of trust is that it connects parents, child and staff and “binds” their relationship. Trust “lubricates” the relationship through positive communication. Time is not wasted with friction and heat, decisions and actions are progressed in a timely manner. Rights and obligations are met.

The parent also sees that with their right to have open communication with the school, they also have an obligation to communicate “the good things that are happening, not communication only occurring when things go wrong I think is very important in terms of building that trust.” This parent is recognising the role they have in constructing and maintaining a trustworthy school. Trust is seen as a resource that makes a difference and can be encouraged by direct and conscious action.

The second quality is relationship and was identified 93 times during the parent interviews.

*Transcript extract 5: “Certain expectations and they will meet those most of the time”*

1. Interviewer: Excellent. I was wondering if you would tell me about what you understand of the word trust.

2. Parent 5: It’s really about beliefs. Belief in somebody else and believing that you know the person and believing that your relationship with them there are
certain rules and there are certain expectations and they will meet those most of the time.

Trust is used in a whole lot of ways. I trust that person to, I trust that person not to and it depends on your relationship with the individual, what your dealings are with them. How can you see them, what your experience is with them? It’s really down to believing a person will be what you think they are or what they say are or what they say they will do.

It’s almost a consistency thing. You trust a person will not misuse your money if it’s a banker. You trust a person to tell you the truth if it’s something else.

You trust the person to do the job or you trust a person—it’s often an expectation and that they will deliver in some way whether in behaviour or in attitude or keeping a confidence or whatever it might be.

So trust is quite an interesting one. Marketing is based on developing a trust even though it often has very weak foundations. Family is often based on trust, employer—employee relationships often have a large trust element to it, governments and citizens, I guess tied in with my study stuff there is trust in there as well.

That is people in positions of power will do what they say they are going to do and do things that (a) won’t harm you and (b) hopefully might benefit you or the community or whatever it might be. (.) It’s not all about self interest. I guess in a roundabout way I don’t usually have a straight answer for most things you ask me.

But it’s around how you, what you believe a person is and how they’ll operate.

The parent clearly describes their expectation that trust is connected with an expectation of the other person’s behaviour, and that they will deliver in some way whether in behaviour
or in attitude, and that keeping a confidence is important. They indicate this in relation to school staff, particularly the position of power that staff hold. Later on in the interview Parent 5 also includes teachers as people in “positions with power” who need to use the power ethically. “Trust means being able to rely on someone knowing that they won't betray you, and then the flip of that is being trustworthy, where someone can rely on you and know that you won't betray them.”

As discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.3.3 Robinson), Robinson’s (2007, p. 18) meta-analysis concludes that the important role a safe and organised learning environment has on achievement outcomes is a leadership dimension for Principals. Robinson cites Heck et al. (1991), saying that a safe and supportive environment is founded on respectful relationships and clear and consistently enforced social expectations and discipline codes. In one study which surveyed teachers, parents and students (Heck, 2000), there were consistent reports across all three groups of the extent to which they felt safe, comfortable and cared for. The more positive these reactions, the higher the school quality and the higher its achievement levels when student background factors were controlled.

*Transcript extract 6: “It’s really the way of life”*

1. Interviewer: So how do you think we encourage a trustworthy environment in school?

2. Parent 21: Well see it creates more of a, we have a very trustworthy environment in the school here I think. I can’t or don’t know of any instances where as a result of not trusting or not being confident has had an effect on someone’s trust. To further build it in the school I feel it’s more encouragement of confidence which in turn builds trust and that’s, I mean what we have on our School Hand is all basically the same thing and it’s really
the way of life. Life comes down to simple basic parameters and it’s been the same throughout millennium and it’s the same throughout the world. It comes, trust comes with confidence. Confidence builds trust and trust builds confidence.

3 Interviewer: Do you think it’s important as a school we keep reminding the kids and the community about the Hand, those values?

4 Parent 21: Yes. Yes, yes. Now I’m also an advocate for “the attitude” [published in the newsletter about choosing a positive attitude]. I absolutely love that.

Professional role was spoken about significantly by parents and was examined in the previous section 4.4.1.1 SRP parent–staff (professional role). Alignment of parent and teacher expectations and obligations supports and promotes relational trust (Bryk & Schneider 2002).

4.4.1.3 SRP parent–staff (reliability)

Utterances that describe “reliability” are combined with their frequency recorded alongside, and include: rely 18, depend 12, available 5, confident 50, faith 13, consistent 24, and depend 13. This produces a frequency rate of 135. Also, combining in the same manner, categories of open 62, honest 26, and welcome 25, gives a frequency rate of 113, called “open”.

Some of these categories are not strictly nouns. This analyses draws on Sack’s Member Inference-rich representative, recorded in his Lecture 14 in Fall 1964–Spring 1965 as an “Inference-making machine” (Sacks & Jefferson 1995, p. 113). In short, speakers use the semantic knowledge of these categories to make meaning, in this case, about trust. The
example below demonstrates the parent’s reliance on the front office staff to provide information in a courteous and efficient manner. So when parents approach the front office, they come with this expectation and the office staff have an obligation to act in this way, in order to maintain their trusted and trusting reputation and relationship.

**Transcript extract 7: “Informed, courteous and efficient”**

1. Interviewer: That leads me in very nicely to the next question. And that’s, how do the various people in positions of authority in a school influence a trusting environment?

2. Parent 5: Yeah I think it’s trust and also belief in competence. I think yeah, you’re right it’s obviously most of the contact parents will have is with the school, the classroom teachers and with front office and maybe sometimes with the Principal, I expect. Would that be right?

3. Interviewer: Mm hmm.

4. Parent 5: Yeah. So I guess for the front office staff, informed, and courteous and efficient staff who will know what’s going on and help whatever the issues might be if they can’t then resolve the issues reasonably quickly and consistently. I have developed, you get a sort of sense of how well a place is ticking over if you go somewhere and say, what’s happening with and somebody says, oh they’re doing that and they’re doing that and I know this is happening and you need to do this that and the other, really good, really good.

The parent describes the importance of competence, reliability, courteous and efficient behaviour. These behaviours assist the parent to feel that their child’s school is well
organised and these assumptions reinforce beliefs that the school is meeting the educational needs of students.

4.4.1.4 SRP parent–staff (open)

Another expectation parents spoke about during the data collection was in relation to the anticipation that the school staff are open and honest to parents and their children on a number of fronts.

Transcript extract 8: “Open and honest”

1  Interviewer: How do you think a trustworthy school environment is encouraged?

2  Parent 20: I think that’s by people being honest and being open because I believe that we all muck up at times, and teachers also muck up at times, and to be honest with their students in their classroom, that if they have made a mistake that they acknowledge that they have because then more likely the children will also do that. Children have to know too that people are human and we all make mistakes and the same with the children. Teachers are the role models so if they can do it in an appropriate way then the children are more likely to do that because that’s what we want children to do is to learn by their mistakes. If they’ve actually done a mistake or done something that they can feel comfortable in a trusting relationship and an environment they are more likely to then acknowledge whatever they’ve done and then work out ways to actually improve the situation or not to let that actually happen again.
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

The parent describes the value that they place on lifelong learning: that is, as we learn we make mistakes. It is through the process of making mistakes and recognising these in a supportive environment, that learning takes place. Parent 20 also recognises that mistakes are part of being human, “people are human and we all make mistakes”. The expectation for teachers, as described in this transcript, is that they need to recognise their mistakes and articulate them to the children in an attempt to demystify mistake making.

This focus on learning moves the everyday interaction from a blame construct to an open and honest supportive environment predicated by learning. Coupled with the School’s publicly encouraged agreement, “Go to the Source—Staff agreement” (see Appendix 8)—all stakeholders are encouraged to discuss concerns with the person and work through issues before they fester. Robinson (2007, p. 18) supports this approach as “staff conflict is quickly and effectively addressed”. Having processes and attitudes in place that encourage people to talk about concerns helps resolve misunderstanding and builds the SRP, relationships and MCD trust.

The literature on school trust often refers to open and honest environments as a quality or by-product apply of a trusting environment. Tschannen-Morgan (2004, p. 17) defines trust as “one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benefvolent, honest, open, reliable and competent”. Openness is also found in the analysis of this project as a quality and expectation of the trusting School environment—alignment of expectations and obligation is confirmed.

4.4.1.5 SRP parent–staff (safety)

The pair of parent–staff is based on the parent’s rights to expect a safe environment for their child, and school staff are legally bound and are expected by parents and the statutory
regulations to ensure a safe school environment. The data reveals many and varied examples. However, through the analyses of the parent transcript, a predominant theme on student safety was identified. Close examination revealed 62 references about student safety (safe 53 and secure 9) by parents. These references clearly refer to the rights and obligations that school staff have to ensure a safe and secure environment for students.

*Transcript extract 9: “She’ll be fine”*

1. Interviewer: What does trust look like or sound like, or feel like, in the school? Is that [your] understanding of trust? So what do you expect in the school setting?

2. Parent 1: That your child is safe, that when you leave your child, you know, that she’ll be fine, and when she comes home she’s not going to be, like she’ll be like a better person in the other way around. And when you, like, leave her, you expect that she would learn, I expect.

In this extract the parent begins by connecting safety in direct response to the question seeking the parent’s understanding of trust. This suggests that the parent believes that trust is associated with safety and expects that her child will be safe at school, and secondly that she will learn. The expectation is clearly stated, that the child will be the same, if not “better”, possibly referring to her physical and emotional state, when the parent collects her at end of the school day. This parent also disclosed during the interview that a previous school she had investigated prior to enrolling her child at the Vivaldi School had what she described as an “unsafe playground”. The students were permitted to play adjacent to the car park and this was perceived by this parent as “unsafe”.

277
Both rights and obligations between parents and staff to ensure a safe environment are clearly defined in the legal requirement that all teachers are in *loco parentis*, Latin for "in the place of a parent". This means that all actions pertaining to the physical and emotional safety of the child are fulfilled by the teacher. However, there are different degrees of interpretation. Schegloff, in Sacks and Jefferson (1995) the Introduction of Sack’s *Lectures on conversation, volumes I and II* (p. xiii) recalls, a legal fascination Sacks held pertaining to what constituted a “proper and acceptable manner”. The subjective legal interpretation of “acceptable” is also an issue for staff in meeting their perceived expectation of ensuring a safe environment for children, as mentioned above in relation to the “unsafe playground”. Clearly, the school the parent visited viewed the playground next to the car park as “acceptable”.

There are also other binding legal requirements which hold school staff accountable for their actions. All government school employees are bound by the rules and regulations stated in the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993 (PSEMA). The Principles of Public Administration and Management, Human Resource Management, and Conduct, together with the Code of Conduct (2002), are intrinsic elements of these employment arrangements. These statutory requirements inform employees of their obligations and rights.

As well as the PSEMA, teachers have their professional obligations clearly articulated through the *Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Amendment Act 2010*. This lawful function is to monitor and maintain the integrity of all registered teachers in the Northern Territory, through the employee, and this is delegated to the school Principal. These enacted requirements provide the platform to frame professional conduct and lead the profession in quality and ethical behaviour.
In relation to the *Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Amendment Act 2010* and safety, all teachers are required to meet the NT Teachers Registration Board’s Standard of Professional Practice, “Teachers create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments”. There are four descriptors of this requirement:

- Teachers develop and support relationships within classrooms, the school and the wider community that promote a sense of belonging.
- Teachers build and maintain a positive learning environment where respect for the individual and for group dynamics is fostered and where learning is the focus.
- Teachers provide a learning environment that engages and challenges their students, and encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers use and manage the materials, technologies, resources and physical space of the learning environment to create a stimulating and safe learning space (Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory 2011).

It seems that these examples are clearly articulated and that there should be no misunderstanding. However, Garfinkel (1991) applies his legal knowledge to this and points out that there are different degrees of understanding of natural accounts of order in everyday life. Everyday expectations are entwined in daily life and meeting these moral expectations is often argued from different perspectives and dependent on certain situations. Expectations about how long processes should take when dealing with safety issues, in relation to performance managing a teacher and eventually moving them on, takes many months, and parents don’t always understand this and, as a result, trust is lost. One parent put it:
Yeah and it took a while for that to come through [replace the poor performing teacher with a competent teacher]. It took a while but hey, I accept that that was an isolated circumstance and in any organisation there are going to be people who aren’t up to the job. That was as much of a problem with the system as it was a trust issue in the school, but you couldn’t have too many of those otherwise—if it had happened a second time [having a poor performing teacher teach their child another year] then people are going to think it’s time to move my children (un-published Parent 18 interview, p. 129).

Examples of school mistrust and the consequence of this is documented (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Kochanek 2005; Tschannen-Moran 2004) from a sociological and School Leadership perspective. However, the fact that the parents at the Vivaldi school, according to the data, have schematic structures around their expectations of safety and it will be shown that staff are unaware of the degree of these views. Without a clear understanding of these expectations, it is somewhat difficult to act on them. Given the Ethnomethodological frame, it is only through talk-in-interaction that people find ways to understand these sometimes hidden beliefs. Given the mobile population of students and staff in Northern Territory schools, the practicalities of understanding parents’ expectations of the school is no small matter.

4.4.1.6 Implications from the parent SRPs

This study has, in some small way, provided a summary of critical issues around the subset of trust that contributes to the overall trust “bank” of individuals and the community’s view of trust. This has provided a starting point for school communication to ensure that the presented SRPs are clearly articulated to the stakeholders, and conversely, rights and obligations are met. It also provides a different emphasis to perception surveys, both to
interpreting them and constructing them. This qualitative analysis has afforded in depth insights into the stakeholders’ perceptions of trust—descriptive qualities which are situated in the Vivaldi School.

References to the importance of safety have recently become linked with trust in schools. Four core research publications on trust in schools sow this increased connection by the number of references within the publication, and this increases with time. Bryk and Schneider’s in-depth work, discussed in Chapter Three, has two references to safety, one being a research connection with student mobility and Bryk and Schneider’s concerns regarding safety and conflict in the schools they leave (2002, pp. 18 & 199). Tschannen-Moran presents three references to safety, with only one of significance referring to teacher emotional safety when learning (2004, p. 108). Kochanek makes four references to safety (2005). More recently, Bryk et al. (2010) make 81 references to safety and connects it to school participation. Demonstrating that, "...it [safety and order] demonstrates the strongest relationship for improving [student] attendance a strong report [safety and order] were three times more likely to improve...Institutional safety and order is the most basic prerequisite for students' academic participation" (2010, pp. 85–6).

The meta-analyses of research (Zammit et al. 2007) undertaken to review and synthesise contemporary educational research-based knowledge on teaching and leading for Australian schools articulates the importance of safety in schools. Zammit et al. (2007, p. 11) cite several longitudinal research projects that identified a number of features that predicate supportive and inclusive teaching/learning environments. Of the five elements, “students’ feeling of safety and sense of belonging” is described as an important element of teaching and learning.
Similarly, Robinson (2007) reports findings on an extensive meta-analysis on the impact of leadership on learning, and one of five dimensions significant to the argument that safety is an important right and obligation of parents and schools. Dimension Five: Ensuring an orderly (safe and caring) and supportive environment draws on the extensive study by Bryk and Schneider (2002). Key messages in this dimension call for leaders to establish and maintain “clear discipline code, and minimal interruptions to teaching time...protection of faculty from undue pressure from parents and officials, and effectiveness in resolving conflicts” (2007, p. 18).

The leadership in higher performing schools is also judged by teachers to be significantly more successful than the leadership of lower performing schools in protecting teachers from undue pressure from education officials and from parents (Heck 1992; Heck, Marcoulides & Lang 1991). This finding was particularly strong in high school samples.

An orderly and supportive environment is also one in which staff conflicts are quickly and effectively addressed. In one study, the Principal’s ability to identify and resolve conflict, rather than allow it to fester, was strongly associated with student achievement in mathematics (Eberts & Stone, 1986). In a response to numbers of staff talking behind people’s backs or “white-anting” others, it was decided to encourage everyone, including the parents, to speak directly to the person regarding concerns. It was noted that many of the issues, if discussed when they arise, are quickly and respectfully resolved. The Vivaldi School collaboratively developed a framework that is called, “Go to the source—Staff Agreement” (see Appendix 8). This Staff Agreement formalises the process and provides a short written statement new staff receive when they join the Vivaldi School. Parents are informed through the School newsletter. The data shows that this has by and large worked.
### 4.4.2 Students

This analysis has resulted from data analysis using MCD and non-regular standardised relational pairs (SRP): Students: secrets/trust; breaking rules/consequences; feeling safe/school values. SRPs have certain standardised rights and obligations that can be expected from each other. As discussed earlier, this phase of the analysis examines the membership categories of trust that have been demonstrated in the data to show particular rights and obligations to each other. The forthcoming section examines the data collected from the students.

#### 4.4.2.1 SRP student–student (secrets)

Through the Grounded Theory process of generating merging themes, an early pattern between trust and secrets was observed. The first few students during interviews made consistent reference to trust and secret keeping. This reference was made at the opening of the interview and, in a number of cases, referred back to the importance of keeping a secret and the connection with trust.

Students spoke about secrets in relation to trust. By comparison, staff and parents spoke much less about secrets. It is also worth noting that despite the smaller student cohort of 17, compared to 22 staff and 21 parents, the 67 per cent response rate to secrets is significant. The chart below (Figure 31 Reference to secrets made by students, staff, and parents) demonstrates this comparison.
Figure 31 Reference to secrets made by students, staff, and parents

Through the MCD analysis, it was possible to hypothesise that students associate secret-keeping with trust. In other words, someone who can be trusted is someone who keeps secrets in confidence. Hence, on receiving a secret, the recipient has an obligation to the secret giver and the secret giver has a right to the trust of the secret receiver.

Furthermore, this hypothesis was further reinforced by the evidence that students identified individuals who could not be trusted with the concurrent behaviour of “spreading secrets around” or not keeping secrets. Thus, the receiver of a secret did not maintain the obligation of keeping a secret and violated the secret giver’s expectation of the right to trust the receiver of the secret. As mentioned above, the first few interviews with students established a possible link between secrets and trust as an SRP. During the 17 interviews, five students raised secrets during the interview. Eight children were asked about secrets, and four children did not mention secrets. Nine students raised secrets again through the interview as they chose to illustrate a point as the short transcript below demonstrates Figure 32.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 32 Analysis of who first raised the word "secret" during the interview

In relation to the gender mix, an equal number of boys and girls spoke of secrets. There were 28 references each by boys and girls respectively.

4.4.2.2 SRP student–friends (secrets)

Within the category of secrets, friends are included. Category bound relationships exist with friends and secrets. The students have associated trust with secrets: they are within the same schema. Not consciously known by staff and parents, but students have created a cultural norm in which secret keeping is an expectation of friends. When secret keeping obligations are met, students afford their friends with trust as well as the label of “friend”. This is an example of Sack’s category bound activity where the activity of friendship is bound with secret keeping and trust. Silverman (2006) cites Sack’s and refers to this sophisticated social construct as an “inference-making machine” (p. 194).

Transcript extract 10: “Trust them enough that he wouldn’t tell anyone”

1 Interviewer: Can you tell me what you understand the word trust to be, please?

2 Student 13: [Unclear] trust a friend if they’re like telling a secret or something you can trust them enough that he wouldn’t tell anyone.

3 Interviewer: That’s good. So can—does it—what does it feel like, trust? When you trust someone what does that feel like?
4 Student 13: It feels good not to be able to tell anyone about someone else's secret if they don't want it to be told to anyone else.

5 Interviewer: So does that help your relationship with that person?

6 Student 13: YEAH.

Later in the interview

7 Interviewer: Okay. So have there been—is there a story of distrust in the school that you can think about when you haven't—when you've been let down by someone or something?

8 Student 13: Yes, people [unclear] if you told them something[s] secret they could go around telling the whole school and...

9 Interviewer: Has that happened?

10 Student 13: It's happened to a few people but not me.

And again, later in the interview when asked about distrust:

11 Student 13: [Jack would] go around telling everyone about the secrets and all that stuff.

12 Interviewer: So you seem to gravitate around kids that you can trust, S13?

13 Student 13: Yeah.

As the interview progressed, it is the student at turn 2 who associates trust with friendship and secret keeping. In turn 7 when asked by the interviewer for a distrust story, he offered in turn 8 a reference to distrust and secret breaking. This shows that the student connects friends, secrets and trust as a category bound SRP of the MCD: Trust. Within this SRP of student–friends, expectations and obligations to keep secrets as a sign of trust are enacted.
Transcript extract 11: “They say it out to other kids”

1 Interviewer: I see [S2] why do you trust them?
2 Student 5: Because they are kind. They like me.
3 Interviewer: Are there some kids that you don’t trust at school?
4 Student 5: Yes.
5 Interviewer: Tell me about that?
6 Student 5: Well, they say it out to other students.
7 Interviewer: What does that mean?
8 Student 5: They tell stuff about me to other students.
9 Interviewer: And what stuff is that?
10 Student 5: They make stuff up and tell my secrets.
11 Interviewer: How does that feel?
12 Student 5: Bad.
13 Interviewer: Are there adults in the school that you trust?
14 Student 5: Yes.

Through the example of student 13 and student 5, it can be seen that the children clearly make a connection between friendship and the rights and obligations that are associated with secrets. The data indicates that the students hold an understanding of an aspect of what it means to be a friend and the reciprocal responsibilities. The examples above show the mutual social rules around friendship. Specifically, the meaning of the word “secrets” has a deep cultural meaning for the students and this meaning is bound in tacit knowledge about friendship and trust. Giddens (1991) refers to these rules and the routines, scripts or “practical consciousness” applied to organise our everyday behaviour. These are “tacit or taken-for-granted qualities [which] form the essential condition which allows actors to concentrate on tasks in Hand” (p. 36). This shows students connect trust and secret words
and as a result, they are category bound. Describing the social rights and expectations pertaining to secrets between students are not required. This is a firm example of a taken-for-granted situation Garfinkel and Sacks refer to and which is argued in previous chapters. The students clearly have an expectation that friends keep secrets, and this is used to define one’s relationship to others. When this obligation is not met, students are ostracised and labelled in negative terms. These rules for trust and secrets are invisible, yet when broken, the consequences are significant.

Students indicated that there is an expectation that when a secret is offered to a friend that it is generally expected in return. Referring back to the earlier discussion of Garfinkel’s “experiments” in Chapter Two (section 2.43) and how “breaching” behaviours challenged participant’s tacit understanding of contextual conversation. This demonstrated that language is connected in taken-for-granted ways. In the example of students-friends, the way they connect secrets with trusting relationships supports Garfinkel’s findings. Secrets are seen as a symbol of a trusting relationship.

4.4.2.3 SRP student-staff (confidential)

One of the anti-bullying strategies at the School is to encourage students to report all cases of bullying and or harassment. This reporting is done to varying degrees, and confidentiality is often a requirement of reporting an incident to reduce any “come-backs”. Students must report any aspect of safety or threats to their wellbeing. The side effects of school bullying are well documented and if left uninvestigated, problems increase in frequency and intensity. Students have a right to come to school and feel safe and they have a mutual responsibility to report any situation that threatens this. When reporting on the social dynamics of schools, Adams et al. (2009) say that “schools are beginning to create networks
that unite parents, teachers, and the community. Each of these role groups is dependent on the others for successful performance” (p. 10).

Transcript extract 12: “I told my Mum”

1 Student3: When I started at the school, Jett kept eyeballing me, big time. I felt sad. I told my Mum and she spoke to Miss about it. I was worried that Jett would get me back.

2 Interviewer: What happened?

3 Student 3: Well, Miss spoke to the class about the Hand and how to show respect and stuff. She made it sound as if it was everyone in the class, not just me. Jett didn’t look at me.

4 Interviewer: Did Jett stop? What happened?

5 Student 3: Yeah.

6 Interviewer: That must make you feel good? Do you think that’s something to do with trust?

7 Student 3: Yeah. Miss said that we have to work together and stuff.

In this short transcript the actions of the mother and teacher demonstrate their willingness to work on behalf of the child’s need in order to alleviate threats to his emotional and physical safety. Actions by these adults indicate that each other would act in the best interest of the child and resolve the threat. The student also trusted his mother and later the teacher. Should anyone of the three participants described fail to trust the role responsibility of the mother and the teacher, then a resolution is unlikely. This is an example of the social lubrication trust offers school members.
4.4.3 Staff

Adams et al. (2009) claim that social dynamics of schools depend heavily on reliability and that “contractual trust [is] incongruent” with schools. They recognise that “trust emerges from the confidence in knowing that if one party does not uphold the agreement, there is cause for redress” (p. 9). However, due to the complexity of school business, Adams et al. (2009) recognise that this is not always achievable. Cultural norms are significant influences on the degree to which staff define role expectations and obligations. Bryk and Schneider (2002), in regard to relational trust, say when school staff and parents discern that individuals who “are not behaving” in ways that accord with their perception of particular role obligations, then trust is not afforded (p. 21). Reliability is identified in this project, as a determining factor in framing professional role obligations. Therefore, staff who fulfil their role obligation by “doing the right thing”, in a respectful way and “for the right reasons”, are trusted (p. 21).

4.4.3.1 SRP staff–staff (reliability)

Members of communities demonstrate trust in other members they know and also in the other members by virtue of their membership of the community. The longer people remain a member of the community the more they are likely to offer greater amounts of trust to the community. As Fukuyama observes, “community depends on trust, and trust in turn is culturally determined” (Fukuyama 1995, p. 25). School staff recognise that parents entrust their child to them and that this responsibility holds specific legal and social obligations. When staff recognise the relationship between trust reliability and integrity, they are able to meet their professional obligations and these actions build trust with the parents. A staff member comments:

when someone says I trust you to deal with my child or the situation, they expect to have confidence in me to report back to them. They have confidence
in me to fulfil my obligations in finding out about an incident or whatever
happened. If I don’t do that then the trust is breached so if they don’t trust me
they don’t have confidence in me to follow up and report back to them (staff
member Gavin).

*Transcript extract 13: “An element of certainty”*

1 Interviewer: Can you tell me what you understand the word trust to be?
What do you think it is?

2 Staff 2: Well, I’ve been thinking about that one. I think trust involves
reliability. It has a degree of certainty and safety to it and it’s very pivotal to
relationships and influential in relationships.

3 Interviewer: So tell me about that reliability you talk about?

4 Staff 2: Well, I don’t know whether the trust creates the reliability, or the
reliability is a result of the trust, but to me trust has an element of certainty in
it. It’s the certainty of the response. It’s the certainty of the person. It’s the
certainty of the relationship. (1.0) It’s the certainty of the name, you know,
whatever level you’re looking at it. And it’s when that reliability or when that
certainty isn’t there that then there become problems with trust.

5 Interviewer: So tell me about the problems?

6 Staff 2: Well, the problems are that you don’t trust, and then depending on
the relationship or the context that you’re in, you either walk away or you
work on rebuilding your trust, or things change, time changes or whatever and
trust just re-emerges in another form or another shape.
Staff recognise that decisions to trust are based on reliability and context. Depending on these factors, staff discern whether to trust or not and to what degree to repair relationships.

4.4.3.2 **SRP staff–staff (emotional safety)**

Emotional safety supports staff to take professional risks during learning without fear of reprisals. School improvement required staff to encounter new methods of teaching and incorporate this into their daily teaching program. Supporting, caring, and empathetic School Leaders provide staff with a “safety-net” when implementing new pedagogy. Under these conditions, staff are more likely to take learning risks, with the interests of their students at heart, and implement school improvement.

**Transcript extract 14: “You can speak up”**

1 Interviewer: So, do you think it’s important to have a trustworthy school?

2 Staff 17: I do.

3 Interviewer: Tell me about that.

4 Staff 17: I think, yes, because if you can all trust each other I think that things work a lot smoother. You don’t feel—like if you all trust each other and regardless, well not regardless, but you’re not scared to actually speak up, because you don’t feel like you are being judged because you trust that they’re going to [be] seen in the light—you’re all going to see in each other’s light okay, that’s why they’ve said that, and, yes, it makes it a much safer environment I think.

5 Interviewer: Yes, tell me about that—how do you mean a safe environment?
6 Staff 17: When you feel safe that you can speak up without someone going, well, no, that’s ridiculous.

Another aspect of an open and honest environment is that regular and informal feedback is offered to school staff in relation to school procedures. This approach may be seen as insurance, or a method of receiving feedback before problems escalate. Staff members are encouraged to “speak up” in a way that expresses their point of view, even when these are in discord with current thinking. Moreover, interaction with colleagues and School Leaders provide opportunities to participate in social discourse in which examples of personal regard are shared. Thus using trust to “lubricate” difficult situations—staff are not blamed when they fail.

4.4.4 Principal

4.4.4.1 SRP Principal—legislation (professional quality)

The School Principal works within a legislative framework that upholds the rights and obligations of employees and the manner in which employees relate to the public. All school government employees are bound by the rules and regulations as stated in the Public Sector Employment and Management Act (PSEMA). The Principles of Public Administration and Management, Human Resource Management, and Conduct, together with the Code of Conduct, are intrinsic elements of these employment arrangements. These statutory requirements inform employees of their obligations and rights.

The Principles and Code of Conduct are part of the terms and conditions of the employment relationship. As such they are binding on all employees and must be observed by all, including Chief Executive. These standards also constitute a set of standards against which DET and school policies, procedures and other initiatives can be measured. The Code
of Conduct provides more specific guidance on a range of ethical, moral, and behavioural issues can be maintained and enhanced. The Employment Instruction Number 13, section 5.5 Trust and Confidence, states that, “It is essential for the proper working of Government that employees retain the trust and confidence of their employer, colleagues and clients in the manner in which they discharge their official responsibilities” (p. 7).

As well as the Public Service Employment Management Act (PSEMA), teachers have their professional obligations clearly articulated through the Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Act. This lawful function is to monitor and maintain the integrity of all registered teachers in the Northern Territory and this is delegated to the school Principal. These enacted requirements provide the platform to frame professional conduct and lead the profession in quality and ethical behaviour.

Competent teachers have demonstrated successful teaching experience and have a record of effective and ongoing professional learning. They work collegially and in teams to further enhance their professional practice, and take greater responsibility in collaboration with others for identifying and addressing their own learning needs. They are effective members of a school and its broader community and interact effectively with stakeholders (MCEETYA National Framework, November 2003).

Within the legislative framework, Teachers create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments. When these rights and obligations are met, students and parents identify professional competence and trust. The NT Teacher’s Registration requirement for professional standards for teachers articulate the obligation teachers have to their employer, students’ and parents’ and in this case, pertaining to student safety. Teachers develop and support relationships within classrooms, the School and the wider community
to promote a sense of belonging. See Transcript extract 9: “She’ll be fine” 4.4.1.5 SRP

parent–staff (safety) as an example.

**Staff Transcript extract 15: “They have to feel safe”**

1. Interviewer: Yes. So, is there a precondition for a trustworthy
environment? It’s a hard question. For a kid to be able to learn they need to be
able to have a good night’s sleep, have food in their bellies and feel loved. Do
you think there’s a precondition for a trustworthy environment?

2. Staff 15: I think that they have to feel safe, they have to feel liked and
valued, respected, all those kind of things.

The Vivaldi School culture has established an elements of certainty—the School Hand and
the *Code of Conduct*. Guidelines are followed and consequences implemented when serious
breaches occur. When these expectations are not firmly established—difficulties arise—
trust erodes.

**4.5 Summary of significant results**

This section draws together and synthesises the results of the three analyses as in sections;
4.2 Thematic Analysis; 4.3 Grounded Theory; and 4.4 Membership Category Analysis. The
purpose is to answer the research questions that have guided all aspects of the
methodology:

1. “What is trust?”

2. “How is trust constructed?”

In addition to these guiding questions, two research sub-questions have emerged, and
Grounded Theory has afforded opportunities to explore emerging themes:
3. What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement?

4. What impact do rights and obligations have on trust?

These questions are addressed below.

4.5.1 What is trust?

In answering the first research question, “What is trust?”, results assembled illustrate how significant this finding is in relation to the work of a school. The findings are summarised below as a collective definition of situated trust—applications of these elements are specific and relevant to particular situations of time, place and person—presented in the table below (see Table 4 What is trust?).
Table 4 What is trust?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is trust?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
<td>Fulfilling obligations gives confidence to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Sustaining relationships bind school members and validates group identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integrity</strong></td>
<td>Doing the right thing at the right time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Openness</strong></td>
<td>Willing to learn from others and not using power to block or conceal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competence</strong></td>
<td>Relying on a standard of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keep confidence</strong></td>
<td>Keeping social and professional confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feeling safe</strong></td>
<td>Feeling physically and emotionally safe supports risk-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feel of trust</strong></td>
<td>A positive feeling experienced that confirms a trust environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reciprocity</strong></td>
<td>Believing in others to trust, a conscious decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respect</strong></td>
<td>Showing respect helps feeling valued and supports decisions to trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situated in context</strong></td>
<td>Assessing the context before a decision to trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flow</strong></td>
<td>Experiencing a heightened sense of involvement resulting in high achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compassion</strong></td>
<td>Reducing anxiety through empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faith</strong></td>
<td>Believing that something good will happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Developing over time helps support or reject personal views on trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5.2 How is trust constructed?

In response to the second research question, “How does the School construct trust?” the emphasis is on the human interaction and actions that construct trust, not the physical environment. The synthesis of analysed data demonstrates that a complex suite of procedures that facilitate commonly held beliefs about trust are enacted upon and then become normalised. These guide the way business is done at the Vivaldi School. Primarily, four key aspects emerged:

1. *Relationships* established through multiple positive interactions that create and promote *wellbeing*—trusting relationships—create a feeling and cognitive process that enhances a sense of individual and community wellbeing;

2. *Enhancing trust* by the way people communicate;

3. *Governance* by the way business is executed; and

4. *Feeling safe* by combining respectful communication with expectations of emotional and physical safety and meeting professional commitments.

Key School conditions that support trust are presented in Table 5 School conditions that support trust.
Table 5 School conditions that support trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School conditions that support trust?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Relationships bind people together—uniting difference through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>commonality. These connections provide avenues of learning—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>validating individual and collective identity—building cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing trust</td>
<td>School conditions that create and support a common language—the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Hand—supports trust to establish as a norm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication expectation are taught to the students (see Appendix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3, School Hand (five values and motto) and modelled by staff when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interacting with students, staff, and parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Regulations that provide stability, regularity and predictability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When business is executed that meet participant expectations, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is reinforced—some deviation is accepted but regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disappointments erode trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling safe</td>
<td>Emotional and physical safety are foundational to trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combining respectful communication with expectations of emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>safety supports students and staff to meet learning and professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.3 What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement?

Drawing on the literature on school improvement (see section 2.2 School improvement) the synthesis of findings from all three analysis techniques—Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory and Membership Categorisation Analysis—renders insights into contemporary educational leadership. Recognising that School Leadership is complex and multidimensional, findings build on section 4.5.2 How is trust constructed?, and include providing school participants with appropriate and adequate time to learn and problem-solve during school improvement. Relationships are constructive between the students and the staff and students are better engaged in school, and happier to attend school. This is compounding: better school attendance, more enthusiasm and confidence for learning,
more risk taking that supports further learning, improved compliance to behaviour code
with less referrals to the Principal or Assistant Principal. The synthesised findings are
summarised in Table 6 Leadership impact on trust, learning, and school improvement.

Table 6 Leadership impact on trust, learning, and school improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of affect</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trusting</td>
<td>The leader is responsible for establishing and maintaining school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>conditions that enhance trust (see Table 5 School conditions that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>support trust). Applying decision-making processes that provide time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improvement</td>
<td>and experimentation—Framework for Decision Making (see 4.3.2.3 Vignette Three: Staff perspective, and Appendix 6, Leader’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Framework for Decision Making)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.4 What impact do rights and obligations have on trust?

Drawn from the project and guided by the literature (see sections 2.4.2 Definitions of social
trust, section 2.4.3 Ethnomethodology and section 2.3.2 Bryk and Schneider), specifically
Marková et al. (2008) and Garfinkel (1963), the Membership Category Analysis helped
extrapolate findings that answers the question—when the rights and obligations are met
trust is experienced. This means that findings from section 4.5.2 How is trust constructed?,
and section 4.5.1 What is trust?—that reliability, relationship, reciprocity, and integrity are
pivotal to creating and maintaining trust—are used to co-construct school rights and
obligations.

Multiple analyses applied to the data have extrapolated findings and identified new
opportunities to examine the same data using different methods in future research. The
significance of these findings in relation to the literature and their implications are
examined in the next chapter. This final chapter summarises the research and presents the
conclusions and implications for policy, practice, and for further research pertaining to
theory, and methodology. These findings address the final research Phase Five: The art and politics of interpreting and evaluation (as described in section 1.4 Research design). In this final phase “the writer produces the public text that comes to the reader…the conduit for making such [those who are studied] voices heard” (Denzin & Lincoln 2011a, p. 15).
School Trust: Situated to maximise school improvement

A case study of a primary school

Chapter Five: Summary, synthesis and conclusion
Chapter Five: Summary, synthesis and conclusion

5.1 Introduction
This chapter provides a brief synopsis of the thesis chapters—followed by the final synthesis—a similar and difference matrix—which renders the project’s findings and conclusions. Implications for policy, practice, and further research are presented. The art and politics of interpreting and evaluation convey these conclusions.

5.2 Summary of chapters
The four preceding chapters assemble specific aspects of the research process in such a way as to ensure that all aspects of the research process are justified and executed: the theoretical paradigm, the empirical substance, and methodological composition. Chapter One orientates the reader to the rationale of the research and the context of the research site. Chapter Two investigates the contemporary literature relating to school reform and the positive influence school leaders have on school improvement through two significant trust in school studies (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Tschannen-Moran 2004) and a meta-analysis (Robinson 2007). Finally, multidisciplinary trust theories from psychological and sociological perspectives are also drawn on so that these concepts guide theoretical aspects of the project. Chapter Three makes clear all aspects of the methodology and research methods. Through three steps of analysis—Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory, Membership Categorisation Analysis—results were generated. Chapter Four discusses the results. Finally in Chapter Five, the application of a synthesis structure delineates the
results from each other. The results from each step that are identical and those that are unique provided the delineation and consequently the results.

The research project itself provided a professional learning platform that furnished staff with opportunities to reflect on contemporary educational practice. Fitting with the school improvement agenda, this research captured timely findings that further advance educational leadership practice. These implications are couched within section 5.6.3 regarding additional research. Prior to this, the significant findings are presented.

Rather than restate the detail of each analysis result presented in Chapter Four, the salient new knowledge generated through this research is summarised through the synthesis of results and discussion (see below). The key findings are stated in the subheadings of section 5.4 Findings. This is followed by an extraction of the implications of these findings.

5.3 Synthesis of results and discussion

This section provides the synthesis of results as analysed through the application of a similarities and difference matrix. Similarities and differences in the findings between the three analysis methods as well as comparing similarities and differences between participant groups (students, staff and parents) provide a comprehensive synthesis of results. Implications of these significant findings are examined and presented in this chapter.

5.3.1 Similarities

The combination of the results from the three analyses recognises some consistent patterns of evidence and convergence across the case study as well as key outcomes in each of the three participant groups. These similarities in each analysis add strength to the
findings. Firstly, the Thematic Analysis that created the *Understanding trust* theme and subsequent deconstruction (section 4.2.4) resulted in 15 concepts thematically generated (see section 4.5.1 What is trust?). A subsequent deeper analysis of the similarities and difference matrix has identified three core concepts that are significantly supported by all three groups of participants: *Reliability, Relationships, and Reciprocity*. These concepts directly answer the research questions “What is trust?”. The significance of this finding is presented in the findings (section 4.5.1 What is trust?).

Secondly, similarities between the Thematic Analysis and the Grounded Theory analysis confirm the coherent four findings significant to all participants: *Enhancing Trust, Leadership, Mistrust, and Relationships*. The condensed theme of *Understanding trust* is not included in this description as it is reported above (see section 4.5.1 What is trust?).

These summarised converged themes still stand as important findings and these themes provide the sound basis for the synthesis which will follow soon. The four dense themes are summarised:

1. **Enhancing trust** describes conditions throughout the School that support trust and enable it to flourish. School expectations such as those in the Hand are reinforced in policies and procedures. These and other regulations provide stability and predictability which enhances trust.

2. **Leadership** refers to the responsibilities and actions of school leaders, in particular the Principal, in leading an effective school. The leadership must strategically reduce doubt and uncertainty in the minds of students, staff, and parents.

3. **Mistrust** is manifested in doubt and uncertainty which occurs when confidence is broken, over issues such as secrets of children or staff feeling challenged by
the School Leadership. Provocations are summarised around change management central to the School improvement agenda: leadership support not meeting perceived teacher individual needs, leadership’s expectations not matching an individual’s skills level or professional identity, and the rate of change being too fast which results in some people feeling “done to” and not in control.

4. **Relationships** cut through all aspects of interaction at the Vivaldi School.

Throughout the data from all stakeholders, the connection between trust and positive relationships is well documented: connecting with others in supportive ways provides opportunities to build trust and apply trust. Relationships help build understanding, empathy, and bond people emotionally and cognitively.

In answering the second research question, “How is trust constructed?”, the evidence presented shows that three themes—**Enhancing trust, Leadership and Relationships** (see section 4.5.2 How is trust constructed?)—are identified as significant factors in constructing a trusting environment by the three groups of participants. Within the **Mistrust** theme, there are opportunities to implement strategies to minimise this impact that will further promote the construction of trust in schools. These will be discussed in the conclusions of this chapter (section 5.5 Conclusions).

Grounded Theory-informed vignettes are a result of the synthesised data analysis and are presented as abstractions with an interpretative perspective. Each stakeholder vignette typifies trust in the school. The summaries of Vignettes One and Two show convergence of the Thematic Analysis of trust and the parents’ focus on safety and trust. Vignette Three is included in the difference synthesis. Both Vignettes One (section 4.3.2.1 Vignette One:
Student perspective) and Two (section 4.3.2.2 Vignette Two: Parent perspective) show that school conditions that support open communication and processes advance trust.

Further to the findings from the question, “How is trust constructed in the school?”, a synthesis of the Grounded converged themes and the Grounded vignettes reveal an emerging tentative theory that school conditions are fundamental to the construction of trust in schools. This evidence is couched within the Enhancing trust theme (see section 4.2.3.1 Enhancing trust conditions). This is further generated from the significant findings of Enhancing trust conditions, Leadership and Relationships combined with the Grounded vignettes. These considerable recurring factors are the importance of Enhancing trust conditions that are constructed, and maintained by the School Leadership through relationships and are fundamental to constructing trust in schools.

5.3.2.1 Students

In relation to the research question, “What is trust?”, similarities identified between the participant groups are synthesised here. It is worth restating that the student cohort is 28 per cent, staff 37 per cent and parents 35 per cent. While considering this disparity, the empirical students’ data collection met saturation early in the processes. On this basis, more students would not have changed the concepts generated from the data. Also, as discussed in the Literature review, children in the age-range of the interviewed participants (10–11 years old) contribute to abstract concepts in a concrete way (see section 2.4.5 Trust and children). Students’ concepts of trust are similar to staff: Reliability, Relationships, Confidentiality and Reciprocity (see sections 4.2.4.1 Reliability; 4.2.3.5 Relationships; 4.2.4.6 Keeping confidence; and 4.2.4.9 Reciprocity).
In relation to the research question, “How is trust constructed?”, students validated the emerging Grounded theme that the structural conditions established in the school—Enhancing trust conditions (see section 4.2.3.1 Enhancing trust conditions) such as the Hand—played a substantial role in developing trust. Relationships are also important to students in relation to trust confirmation. It is not surprising that students, because of their developmental age, did not include the theme of Situated context (see sections 4.2.4.11 Situated and; 4.2.4.4 Openness with trust). This is not to say, however, that students do not value situated and open aspects of trust, as the data shows that they do. However, through the students’ transcripts, significant causation is not ascertained. Though, experience in the Vivaldi School context and in the literature on educational trust shows the inference is that the Principal is seen to be responsible for ensuring that students are safe at school.

5.3.2.2 Staff and parents

Staff and parents’ views of trust in the School—what it is trust and how is it constructed—are similar. They recognise the situated nature of trust (see sections 4.2.4.11 Situated context and 4.2.4.9 Reciprocity). Feeling good was described primarily from the adults’ perspective. Parents did not include confidentiality in their descriptions of trust. However, integrity is more widely used by parents and confidentiality is contained within it (see section 4.2.4.3 Integrity).

The Membership Categorisation Device (MCD) summary analysis rendered five parent SRP categories listed in order of importance: parent–staff (professional role), parent–staff (relationship), parent–staff (reliability), parent–staff (openness), and parent–staff (safety) (see section 4.4 Membership Category Analysis). The parents revealed the cultural
importance they place on the MCD of trust, through the Standardised Relational Pairs (SRPs) rights and obligations (see section 4.4.1. Parents).

**5.3.2 Difference**

Significant new findings are identified in the second and third analysis methods: Grounded Theory and MCD. The Grounded Theory analysis reveals a significant interconnection between school leaders, trust and the school improvement agenda. The data shows the magnitude of the various decision-making processes required in order to implement school improvement. Pockets of opposition associated with the improvement change agenda are uncovered and these are associated with teaching practice (pedagogy) decision-making. Results confirmed previous research by Bryk and Schneider (2002) on trust in schools which endorse the pivotal importance of relationships trust—Grounded Theory generated relational trust—and enforcing professional responsibilities (see section 2.3.2 Bryk and Schneider). However, this connection with the Decision Making Framework in relation to School improvement and trust is a new finding (see section 5.4.13 Finding 13: Decision making is specific to situations.

Findings from this social inquiry using Sack’s and Jefferson’s (1995) MCD analysis (see section, 3.2.3.2 Strategy: Ethnography; and 3.3.2.3 Membership Category Analysis) identify critical stakeholder expectations about their understanding of the rights and obligations in relation to trust. The significance of meeting stakeholder anticipation is reinforced by a trust norm associated with participants’ expectations of trust in the School. These results, specifically through the language shown through MCD analysis, demonstrate the socially constructed language that supports members of the School to construct or deconstruct trust. This finding is considerable and is summarised. Vignette Three, “Walking the tightrope of school improvement: “You mean you don’t value my practice?” (see section
4.2.3.3) is a constructed monologue—synthesised through Grounded Theory—where a teacher’s disquiet about school improvement is expressed. Despite every intention to provide a supportive and trusting school environment, some evidence revealed a dissonance or disconnect between capacity, expectations, and school improvement. Despite this small finding, potentially the cross analysis of Grounded Theory and MCD has provided an insight that may be useful in other settings and thus are findings (see sections 5.4.12 Finding 12: Emotional safety supports school improvement; and 5.4.13 Finding 13: Decision making is specific to situations). A Decision Making Framework (Snowden & Boone 2007) is used in this context—it recognised ways to solve problems based on their complexity—though this project is not excluding other approaches (see Appendix 6, Leader’s Framework for Decision Making).

An unexpected finding was the significance that students placed on secret giving and secret keeping. It was through the lens of the MCD that this finding was constructed. Previously, in the Grounded Theory analysis, secrets were reported on in relation to Mistrust and the Grounded Vignette One, “My Teacher helped me, I trust her” (section 4.3.2.1 Vignette One: Student perspectives); shows the important role that professional confidentiality plays in the eyes of students. As a result of reporting bullying, the student can feel that the problem is resolved and his confidence is upheld by the teacher. This finding shows that students relate trust to secrets and have created a working definition of trust that includes secret-keeping. Through a student-owned enculturation—social norms that dictate that trust is earned based on students’ rights to give secrets to trusted friends and are obligated to keep secrets—failing secret-keeping may result in peer isolation.

Significantly, MCD SRPs revealed a professional obligation between the Principal and legislation—Principal–legislation (professional qualities)—demonstrating the extensive
impact that this right and obligation the Principal has to legislation and ultimately to every aspect of the School. The manner in which this responsibility is implemented by the Principal is at the cutting edge of the emotional climate of the school—confirming findings of Bryk and Schneider (2002) and Tschannen-Moran (2004). These results reveal the fine balance between managing leadership situations that are “close to the edge”, that is, near the boundary of acceptable and unacceptable, as described Snowden and Boone (2007), see Appendix Six (Leader’s Framework for Decision Making). As previously described, complex and competing demands exist for the Principal—supporting staff though the school improvement agenda; negotiating professional expectation timelines, such as reporting to parents; meeting existing legislative requirements; and fulfilling additional expectations by DET Leaders intending to facilitate School improvement (see section 4.4.4 Principal).

5.3.2.1 Students

In relation to the research question, “How is trust constructed?”, students identified Mistrust significantly more frequently than did staff and parents—trust is being synonymous with secret keeping: when secrets are broken students specially isolate untrustworthy peers. This finding has ramifications for teaching trust in school in an attempt to widen individual’s social group, particularly for students who may already be marginalised.

Students also reported that their learning is supported when they felt emotionally and physically safe in the classroom. The Grounded Theory generated vignette demonstrated how powerful adult intervention is in enabling a safe learning environment (see 4.3.2.1 Vignette One: Student perspective).
5.3.2.2 Staff and parents

In relation to the research question, “How is trust constructed?”, staff data accords with the sum of the case study: there are not differences between staff and parents’ beliefs. Parents emphasised relationships more than Mistrust and spoke of the significance of these with staff and other parents. They said that the open and welcoming environment is a significant factor in trust construction at the Vivaldi School.

Through the data analysis process, two research sub questions emerged and are answered through the MCD analysis and synthesis (see section 4.4 Membership Category Analysis). Significantly, findings on these questions are also included in the final analysis stage and are listed separately (see 4.5 Summary of significant results). The inference here is that these findings are embedded in the social fabric of the Vivaldi School and only through MCD analysis was it possible to reveal deep results. These are reported upon in the findings (see section 4.4).

5.3.3 Summary of synthesis

This theoretical synthesis of results provides the project answers based on the generated, analysed, and synthesised data. It is recognised that knowledge does not emerge from data alone—rather these findings and conclusions are generated from the relationship between empirical substance, theoretical models, and methodological structures. These sections are comprehensively interrelated and are summarised prior to the findings and conclusions.

The analyses also expose ways in which these are context sensitive, as illustrated from the differences and similarities in talk between students, staff, and parents. They are both foundational and, at times, outcomes of trust. The significance of this finding is that this knowledge can further advance the working environment of schools. In considering the
education literature, as well as psychology, sociology, and leadership, the importance of
trust is well documented and has informed this study. Knowing more about this essential
ingredient to a community of practice such as a school, the components identified by the
participants at the Vivaldi School can be applied and promoted. Knowing that trust is
situated, the application of these components is specific and relevant to school contexts.
Careful strategic and practical applications to these findings should render more trust in
schools.

Theoretical findings developed through the data are suggested and consistent with the
development of preliminary Grounded Theory. Analytic generalisations are possible and
some of the findings presented in section 5.3 do have relevance for other schools,
specifically pertaining to school improvement. Methodological findings through the
inductive logic applied to this research enabled results to generate from the data produced
by the participants. This methodological approach enabled the capturing of these empirical
results and the applied analyses that led to the findings that report how participants of the
Vivaldi School understand and construct trust in context. These results are relevant to the
reality created by the participants interacting at the school. It is suggested, however, that
these interactions captured by the research are typical of interactions in other schools.
Therefore, these findings are relevant to other school settings; in particular, the findings of
the Principal’s role in implementing school improvement. Specifically important is an
understanding of the different decision-making processes the Principal uses to solve
complex and complicated problems and how these impact on trust. These significant
findings follow.
5.4 Findings

On the basis of the previous summary of the synthesis, the findings are presented.

5.4.1 Finding 1: What is trust?

It is found that there is no single meaning for trust upon which the participants in the school act, but the meaning for trust is situated according to time, place and the particular group of participants, students, staff and parents.

Vivaldi School participants collectively identify Situated trust elements as:

a. **Reliability**: Fulfilling obligations gives confidence to others

b. **Relationships**: Sustaining relationships binds school members and validates group identity

c. **Integrity**: Doing the right thing at the right time

d. **Openness**: Willing to learn from others and not using power for blocking and concealing

e. **Competence**: Executing work at an expected standard

f. **Keeping confidence**: Keeping social and professional confidence such as secrets

g. **Feeling safe**: Feeling physically and emotionally safe supports risk-taking

h. **Feel of trust**: A positive feeling experienced that confirms a trust environment

i. **Reciprocity**: Believing in others to trust, a conscious decision

j. **Respect**: Showing respect helps others feel valued and supports decisions to trust
k. **Situated in context**: Assessing the context before a decision to trust

l. **Flow**: Experiencing a heightened sense of involvement resulting in high achievement

m. **Compassion**: Reducing anxiety through empathy

n. **Faith**: Believing that something good will happen

o. **Time**: Developing over time helps support or reject a personal view of trust.

### 5.4.2 Finding 2: To trust or not to trust?

It was found that no single rule applies to the individual or group decision-making process to trust or not to trust.

a. Members of the Vivaldi School community make judgements about people’s trustworthiness based on their conception of the person’s trust credibility. The criteria for trust credibility are based on section 5.4.1 Finding 1: defined Situated trust.

b. Members apply cognitive and emotional decision-making to make a trusting judgement or assessment based on these criteria. Based on the judgements decisions are made to award or not award trust in any given situation and or person. For example, students make this judgment based on secret keeping and being kind and respectful. Similarly students who are hurtful are not trusted. Staff, parents, and students use this situated trust criteria.
5.4.3 Finding 3: Situated trust elements

It was found that three core Situated trust elements (identified from 5.4.1 Finding 1: What is trust?) were normalised amongst students, staff and parents.

a. Three situated elements of trust are widely used: Reliability, building trusting relationships and a willingness to engage in reciprocal exchanges.

b. Trust contributes to more trust: School trust norms are established which normalise new members into situated School trust.

5.4.4 Finding 4: Constructing trust

It is found that trust is constructed when three core trust themes are situated: Trust conditions, Leadership and Relationships.

a. The School Hand and classroom meeting processes provide binding processes that build trust. These Trust conditions enhance opportunities for people to positively connect with others and develop situated trust.

b. A predictable frame established by School Leadership—Distributed, Transformational, and Pedagogical—Leadership enables a coherent and reliable school language that connects school members “within” and this further builds trust.

c. Relationships are established mechanisms to build and sustain trust as a process which alleviates anxiety and builds goodwill between people.

5.4.5 Finding 5: Conditions that promote Situated trust

It is found that there are distinct conditions that provide and promote opportunities for Situated trust to flourish.
a. Explicit and implied standards and expectations of behaviour that promote confidence and reliability are central to constructing trust in the School. Processes and attitudes which support these standards, such as the School Hand, and policy and procedures, provide consistent approaches that reinforce norms of order and stability. These and other regulations afford predictability and help promote feelings of physical and emotional safety.

b. When these characteristics are embedded widely and are expected by members, they then become embedded in the school culture and trust is seen as the norm: trust builds trust.

5.4.6 Finding 6: Principal’s role is central to trust conditions
It is found that, while there is no one person who creates school conditions which enhance or promote trust, it is recognised that the role of the Principal is central to establishing these conditions.

a. A safe respectful and collaborative school culture provides and promotes opportunities for situated trust to flourish. School leaders, and particularly the Principal, are responsible for creating and maintaining everything in respect to policy that affects School Council, parents, students, and the staff. Principals’ professional obligations are varied and extensive.

b. Staff and parents recognise that the Principal is the link between the Department of Education and Training and the school. Students know that the Principal has ultimate authority. The Principal, like staff, is a member of DET. Staff and parents recognise that the Principal is the link between DET and understand that some unfavourable changes are directives from DET. Students know that the Principal has ultimate authority.
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

c. As a consequence of these influences, the Principal is positioned to strategically influence the cultural norms and influence the degree of trust in the school.

5.4.7 Finding 7: Mistrust is a lack of confidence

It was found that Mistrust in its mild form is a lack of trust or confidence in current or future experiences and manifests in feelings of doubt and uncertainty.

a. More intense forms of distrust are couched with strong cognitive suspicion.

Breaking of confidence, such as with secrets, is an issue expressed by students.

b. A few disclosures revealed professional self-doubt and mistrust expressed by staff. These feelings generated from staff inadequacy and this tended to cause withdrawal from trying new teaching methods, and feeling negative toward the School Leadership.

c. These provocations can be summarised around change management central to the School improvement agenda and are expressed further in (section 5.4.12 Finding 12: Emotional safety supports school improvement).

5.4.8 Finding 8: Reliable role obligations builds trust

It was found that trust is developed between school members based on the reliability and the degree to which they meet their obligations inherent in their school role.

a. The degree to which role obligations are met impacts on the degree of trust built.

b. When the meeting of role obligations is embedded in the school, cultural norms reinforce these and contribute to the trust school conditions.

c. When role obligations do not meet expectations, based on the judgments of others, trust conditions such as reliability, integrity, and competence are
reduced. One or two experiences of expectation disappointment are tolerated, however, more experiences lead to distrust and parents or staff leave the school.

5.4.9 Finding 9: Trusting relationships permeate all aspects of trust

It was found that trusting Relationships existed through all aspects of trust within the interactions at the Vivaldi School.

a. Throughout the data from all stakeholders, the interconnections between trust and positive relationships are well documented: connecting with others in supportive ways provides opportunities to build trust and apply trust.

b. Associations between friends, classmates, colleagues, student–teacher, parent–teacher, teacher–teacher relationships, are vast, varied, and interlaced. Relationships help build understanding, empathy, and compassion, and bond people emotionally. Trusting relationships contribute to the members’ definitions of trust as well as lubricating and enhancing aspects that construct trust: Conditions and Leadership. Quality trusting relationships are dependent on reliability and integrity to fulfil obligations. They furnish an open attitude; a willingness to learn from others while minimising positional power that potentially blocks and conceals. Trusting respecting relationship helps others feel valued and supported as well as fostering feelings of physical and emotional safety. With time, reciprocal trust promotes others’ confidence by being trusted and promotes flow and a further willingness to endorse others’ ideas.

c. As a result of these factors, trusting relationships build confidence, bind school members, and validate their group identity. This supports risk-taking and
encourages further decisions to trust, while minimising anxiety. All of these factors are used by participants at the Vivaldi School to identify and build trust.

5.4.10 Finding 10: Safety impacts on learning

It was found that students’ emotional and physical safety impacts on their learning.

a. When students feel safe, they are more willing to take risks and this helps their learning.

b. Teachers play a crucial role in reinforcing student rights and obligations and School Leadership provide support when these requirements are not met.

5.4.11 Finding 11: Trust norms—Relationships, Reliability, and Reciprocity

It was found that the school has a high trust norm: most participants most of the time practice respectful, supportive relationships, act in a reliable manner to fulfil obligations, and are open to engagement in trust exchanges. They value the school conditions and leadership:

a. The School Council and School Leadership work hard to meet these three trust elements—Relationships, Reliability, and Reciprocity.

b. Data suggests that people who lose trust in the school leave the school.

c. This further reinforces the trusting norms within the school community.

5.4.12 Finding 12: Emotional safety supports school improvement

It was found that emotional safety is at the heart of teacher to Principal trust.

a. When teachers’ professional practice is genuinely validated by leaders, they feel emotionally safe. When teachers feel safe they are more willing to try new
approaches. Hence, they are more willing to participate in school improvement.

b. This recognition authenticates teachers’ professional identity. Teachers are more motivated to continue their professional learning and redefining their professional identity so that it aligns with the school improvement agenda.

5.4.13 Finding 13: Decision making is specific to situations

It was found that school leaders purposefully apply a selected problem-solving approach depending on the type of decision and situation of the problem in order to build and maintain school trust.


b. When the most appropriate decision-making process is selected by the leader, the resolution is most satisfactory. If the wrong method is selected, the consequences can be significant and the loss of trust follows.

5.5 Conclusions

This theory building study concludes that three tentative theories are generated from the themes in the findings, all of which would require extensive further investigation and testing: trust is situated in time, place and people: Situated trust; trust is a component of school culture: School trust; and; Trust is based on role rights and obligations: Role trust.

The fourth conclusion, School Leadership with trust is at the heart of school change (see section 5.5.4 School Leadership with trust is at the heart of school change) is also grounded in data. However, further significant testing is required to determine an early theory. The three tentative theories (Situated trust, Role trust and School trust) suggest the way trust is defined and constructed in the case study school. These theories contribute to the
School Trust: Situated to maximise school improvement

Literature and the significance of the findings offer important foci for further research are expanded on in the conclusions which follow.

5.5.1 Trust is situated in time, place and people: Situated trust

The first conclusion is that there is no single meaning for trust upon which the participants in the School act, but the meaning for trust is situated according to time, place and the particular group of participants, students, staff and parents (see 5.4.1 Finding 1: What is trust?). Members of the school ascertain people’s trustworthiness based on their conception of the person’s trust credibility. The criteria for trust credibility are situated. Significant references are made to three key situated trust elements: respectful honest relationships, reciprocal relationships, and role reliability. School participants construe an individual’s trustworthiness based on these criteria. The decision to award trust is situated. For example, students take a position of peer trust based on their trustworthiness to keep a secret. Similarly, students who break secrets are not trusted. Staff, parents, and students use this situated trust criteria.

Within this conclusion, situated trust succeeds under certain conditions. Explicit and implied standards and expectations of behaviour that promotes confidence and reliability are central to constructing trust in the school. Processes and attitudes which support these standards, such as policy and procedures, provide consistent approaches that reinforce norms of order and stability. These and other regulations afford predictability and help promote feelings of physical and emotional safety.

It is concluded that while no one person creates school conditions which support trust-building, it is recognised that the role of the Principal is central to establishing these conditions. When the Principal is reliable, these actions give certainty to the school and this
promotes a positive sense of direct and achievement. A safe respectful, collaborative, and predictable school culture provides and promotes opportunities for situated trust to flourish. Regular opportunities for school members to positively build and sustain respectful relationships afford trustworthy processes. These relationships alleviate anxiety and build goodwill between people. This builds collective school trust, as the School stakeholders themselves define it.

In summary, this new tentative theory concludes that there is no single meaning for trust upon which the participants in the school act, but the meaning for trust is situated according to time, place and the particular group of participants, students, staff and parents. Situated trust is more predictable under certain conditions, such as predictable school routines. The Principal has obligations to establish expectations and policies which maintain order. Situated trust is supported by reliability and a collective collaborative trustworthy culture builds School trust.

5.5.2 Trust is a component of school culture: School trust

It is concluded that trust is a component of school culture. Fifteen commonly “taken for granted” elements of trust are socially generated and recognised by members of the Vivaldi School community as components of trust (see 5.4.1 Finding 1: What is trust? 5.4.5 Finding 5: Conditions that promote Situated trust and 5.4.6 Finding 6: Principal’s role is central to trust conditions). “Taken for granted” meanings of trust require no explanation and as such are collectively reinforced during social interaction. A Trusting school culture is built up over time with shared patterns of behavior created to deal with external factors while maintaining group identity. Through commonly held social norms, group members establish collective understandings of trust within the cultural fabric of the school. Trust, as a component of school culture and is developed to maintain order and inclusion of new
members into the school culture. Socially embedded in expectation and action, the 15 elements of trust are collectively maintained. Social cohesion is a result of enacting trust and continual social interactions and this further builds an inclusive. When these characteristics are embedded widely and are expected by members, (often “taken for granted” or tacit) they then become embedded in the school culture and trust is seen as the norm.

When School trust is enacted, students and staff feel physically and emotionally safe (see 5.4.1 Finding 1: What is trust? and 5.4.12 Finding 12: Emotional safety supports school improvement). When students feel safe, they enjoy coming to school and are more willing to take educational risks during learning. The school processes provide procedures that build trust, such as school community socials. A predictable frame established by School Leadership such as the school Hand and Staff agreement (see Appendix 8) enables a coherent and reliable school common discourse that connects school members, particularly teachers, and this in turn contributes to consolidating trust which builds trust. Relationships build and sustain mechanisms that demonstrate trust as a process which alleviates anxiety and builds goodwill between school members. This study shows that supportive and respectful relationships are evident in all subcase groups or all aspects of the data. Words such as, “open” and “honest” shared social norms are frequently used to help qualify the preferred approach to communication and trustful relationship building. This supports and builds on previous research of trust in schools (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Kochanek 2005). Collective trustworthy school culture engenders a socially constructed culture of trust exhibited in situated behaviour.

A tentative theory suggests that School trust is established, maintained and embedded by the school members as a component of school culture. School Leadership positions artifacts
such as the Hand to establish cultural norms that enable and sustain a trusting culture resulting in a collective order and regular situated trust exchanges.

5.5.3 Trust is based on role rights and obligations: Role trust

It is concluded that trust is based on role rights and obligations. Individuals hold expectations about others in relation to their role and consequently make judgments about the degree to which individuals meet their role obligation (see 5.4.8 Finding 8: Reliable role obligations builds trust). Both role rights and role obligations are interconnected. Role rights are described as the right or entitlements that people in a particular role hold. For example, students have a right to feel safe at school. Teachers have an obligation to enforce discipline to ensure students feel safe. School leaders have an obligation to ensure that all teachers are fulfilling their professional obligation of teaching as well as enforce other discipline measures when required. When obligations are met consistently then individuals are afforded role trust. Closely interrelated is role credibility which presents a confidence to others that typifies dependable behaviour that fulfils all role obligations. The degree to which individuals and groups achieve their role obligation is judged by individuals. As assessment is made and a degree of role trust is awarded based on the perceptions of others. When role rights and obligations work in a complementary manner that meet both the rights and obligations of all role holders in the school, then the school is performing at a high level. People feel that their needs are being met. This tentative theory describes Role trust and the underlying assumptions that support it.

5.5.4 School Leadership with trust is at the heart of school change

It is concluded that situated trust is at the heart of successful school improvement. Teaching practice change is at the core of school improvement. Enacting school change is complex and complicated. Given that reliability is a significant trust element yet
requirements to make changes to professional practice challenge the predictable nature of reliability. As a result of uncertainty that accompanies change, the trust element of reliability is less situated and therefore trust is put at risk. An example of professional change demands are expressed by the teacher monologue in Chapter Four (see section 4.3.2.3). During times of professional change, opportunities for mistrust are enormous. However, strategic problem-solving with the staff over time can afford occasion for teams to work through problems and find possible improved practice. Providing room for patterns to emerge without School Leadership applying a command-and-control style (Snowden & Boone 2007) can support teacher confidence and validate the teacher’s professionalism. When teacher practice and their attempts to improve their practice through change are confirmed, then teachers feel professionally safe and their professional identity is validated. Reciprocity of trust and supportive relationships support individual teacher’s through the change process and maintain positive relationships between teachers and School Leadership which in turn supports situated school trust.

In summary, the three tentative theories indicate that the foundational nature of School Leadership has on all aspects of the school environment in the creation and maintenance of school trust is evident. The requirement to work within the complex and socially interdependent environment with stakeholders is complex and demanding. These four conclusions have revealed the essential component of understanding and executing the decision-making approach that best fits the situation and developing cultural expectations, followed up by explicit policy guidelines, to inform role obligations. These implications are expanded on in the sections below (section 5.6 Implications 5.6 Implications). These emergent theories locates the Principal’s role in creating provisions that both enhance and enable conditions that position the school members to enact situated trust is central to the degree of school trust across all three stakeholder groups.
5.6 Implications

On the basis of the research conclusions, the implications for policy, practice, and for further research are discussed below. It is recognised that specific adjustments to the Vivaldi School, based on the implications of the study, are recommended and follow the more widely generalised overview below.

5.6.1 For policy

Educational policy has become more national and internationally focussed in the past decade. Prior to this, States and Territories maintained a strong hold on their autonomy. However, in more recent years, the Australian Government has allocated significant budget commitments to national educational projects such as the Australian Curriculum which is being implemented through national policy (ACARA 2012) and NAPLAN. Both significant initiatives aim to improve the educational standard of all Australian school-aged students and are discussed in Chapter Two. It is within this frame that the implications for policy are presented.

When trust evaporates so do enrolments—when parents lack trust in the school, they choose a school in which they perceive is more trustworthy—an assessment based on trust criteria, such as relationships, reliability, reciprocity, and integrity (see 1.2.3 Cost of decline in trust of the public school system and 5.4.2 Finding 2: To trust or not to trust?). Public disclosure of student achievement data does little to promote confidence in disadvantaged schools. The My School™ website at <http://www.myschool.edu.au/>, managed by ACARA claims to compare “like schools”, based on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) rating—similar to but more complex than Socioeconomic Status. Schools
with mobile student populations and poor student attendance find it difficult to compare favourably on the My School™ website. Negative results on the website, expressed in bands of red, further erode community confidence which may result in more students leaving the school. This spiral down of results and student numbers leads to reduced resources, based on the current school funding model, and as a result these schools can offer less engaging programs to support disadvantaged students. In sum, schools with a low ICSEA score have a high percentage of families with high needs which tends to draw school resources away from academic foci to social welfare programs. Implications follow:

1. Policy implications for Governments to:
   - Recognise significant socio economic inequities across Australian schools including adequately resource public school education, particularly low SES schools, in order to redress current imbalances (DEEWR & Gonski, 2011 & Australia Dept. of the Prime Minister and Cabinet & Australian Social Inclusion Board 2011).
   - Increase student retention and completion rates due to low trust in public schools, particularly schools in low socio economic areas due to apparent low School trust at the local school level. Avenues through social inclusion policy development ensure that socially and economically disadvantaged students are afforded additional funding to focus on outcomes from an improved focus on practically implemented School trust. Increase funding equality to provide a means to cater for low SES students and retention approaches that will enhance trust between students, schools and families (see section 2.3.1 Hoy and Tschannen-Moran).
   - Improve understanding of the specifics of School trust and Role trust potentially to empower teachers, to meet the needs of students and
parents. Improved professional satisfaction may help attract and retain teachers to low SES schools.

- Exempt low performing schools based on NAPLAN ACARA modify My School™ website so that they are afforded privacy—public dignity is maintained and schools with a majority of red on the My School™ website are not publically shown.

2. Policy implications for Teacher registration to:

- Recognise mutual trust as an important component of classroom management and communication with staff and parents. Further implications relating to the research findings can assist with improvements in the National Teacher Standards (AITSL 2011). Within the standards—
  1: Know students and how they learn;
  2: Know the content and how to teach it;
  3: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning;
  4: Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments;
  5: Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning;
  6: Engage in professional learning;
  7: Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community—explicitly include trust—creating and sustaining School trust and Role trust.

3. Policy implications for Teacher Education to:

- Assist undergraduate teachers to better meet the needs of students and build collegial trusting relationships. Through an explicit and targeted approach to undergraduate course work, understanding of School and Role
School Trust: Situated to Maximise School Improvement

trust, will assist and consequently enhance their skills in promoting and maintaining trust particularly in the finding of—Relationships, Reliability, Reciprocity and Integrity as central elements to constructing trust.

4. Implications for industrial relations to:
   - Include emotional and physical safety in relation to School trust elements in OH&S policy framework considerations.
   - Improve high levels of trust in schools should improve relationships with the Australian Education Unions.

5.6.1.1 Policy implications for the Vivaldi School

Government Schools in Northern Australia have limited opportunities to influence systemic DET policy which impacts on key aspects of school operations. In particular, staff selection is one aspect that is generally determined by DET. Given the significant finding that the quality and retention of staff are important elements of School trust, this aspect of School policy requires revision. However, some avenues of staff selection are discussed below (see 5.6.2.1 Practice implications for the Vivaldi School).

The three tentative theories generated from the projects findings (see 5.5 Conclusions) inform implications for Vivaldi School policy. Firstly, policy that determines workplace values and communication standards creates boundaries or guidelines for appropriate professional interaction. These policies help support day to day interaction of inclusive and respectful behaviour. Protective measures or consequences for behaviour breaches, laid down in school policy, support the many new Vivaldi School staff. The significance of secrets and trust for students requires change to the school’s behavior policy. Similarly, behavior guidelines for all stakeholders ensure that standards and expectations of behaviour that promotes confidence and reliability are made explicit and policy for
significant variation made clear. Further improvement of school policy requires policy for stakeholder grievance readily articulated and followed when required. Thus stemming potential ongoing alienation and resentment by clearly articulating expected cultural norms. Thirdly, policy around staff decision making make explicit ways in which staff negotiate the rate and pace of professional learning and trialling of new school improvement systems (see 5.4.12 Finding 12: Emotional safety supports school improvement). Findings found that professional change that is rushed and “top down” alienates staff trust (see Transcript extract 14: “You can speak up” 5.4.12 Finding 12: Emotional safety supports school improvement). Finally, policy that supports Role trust that explicitly outlines staff roles and responsibilities make explicit, during times of uncertainty or rapid staff turnover, supports new staff as it informs new school members who is responsible for what.

5.6.2 For practice

The Australian Government has committed an investment of AUD 550 million, over five years prioritising Teacher quality—the establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and the launch of the Smarter School—Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership (OECD et al. 2011, p. 86). This situates school improvement at the heart of the national agenda. To maximise school improvement, conclusions of this project are significant to these national educational agenda and thus impact in educational bodies to:

- Provide professional learning for school leaders that furnish knowledge and practical skills to enable the application of Situated trust and School trust into all Australian Schools. Without an improved awareness of the role of trust in all aspects of schools, professional learning for teachers may well be minimised by undue government pressure and hast. School leaders require a sophisticated
understanding of the trust in order to maximise the changes announced by the Australian Government over the coming years.

- Develop a School trust framework which enables school professionals to locate School trust within a continuum, thus providing recognition to the observable trust elements in time and place. In addition to this, deliver clear guidelines to support school leaders to improve School trust, based on the continuum. Thus, enhance the School Leadership capacities to lead Situated and School trust across Australian Schools.

- Lobby Governments National Principals’ Associations have long expressed concern over an overemphasis on academic performance at the risk of oversimplifying the role of School trust. These findings are timely for these associations to lobby government to include trust indicators within the ACARA My School™ website at <http://www.myschool.edu.au/> My School website.

- Present additional data regarding School trust to National parent associations, as consumers of education, to highlight that of School trust builds social capital and the ACARA My School™ website is not the only school assessment when comparing school quality. Parent associations have a vested interest in crafting social capital in school-community and parent relationships. It is hoped that further information on trust in schools may place the My School website in context.

- Include trust competencies in the National Standard for Principals reference and teachers (AITSL 2011).

5.6.2.1 Practice implications for the Vivaldi School

This single case study identifies four main implications for practice. Firstly, given the finding that trust is situated in time, place and people, it is worth considering the operational nature of creating the school environment that enhances the identified 15 trust elements
(see 4.5.1 What is trust?). School conditions that encourage positive social interaction should assist in developing a collective trusting culture (see 5.5.2 Trust is a component of school culture). Explicit and implied standards and expectations of behaviour that promotes confidence, reliability and safety are all central to constructing trust in the school. Processes and attitudes which support these standards, such as policy and procedures, provide consistent approaches that reinforce norms of order and stability. These and other regulations afford predictability and help promote feelings of physical and emotional safety (see 4.5.3 What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement?).

A safe respectful, collaborative, and predictable school culture provides and promotes opportunities for situated trust to flourish. Regular opportunities for school members to positively build and sustain respectful relationships afford trustworthy processes and need to be strategically developed. The Principal has obligations to establish expectations and policies which maintain order. Situated trust is supported by reliability and a collective, collaborative, trustworthy culture builds School trust. Secondly, cultural conditions that support “taken for granted” elements of trust are socially generated and recognised by members of the Vivaldi School community as components of trust. “Taken for granted” meanings of trust require no explanation and as such are collectively reinforced during social interaction. A Trusting school culture is built up over time with shared patterns of behaviour created to deal with external factors while maintaining group identity. Through commonly held social norms, group members establish collective understandings of trust within the cultural fabric of the school. Thirdly, conditions that support school change are complex and complicated. Providing time and support of professional experimentation in a non-judging environment, as well as maintaining positive relationships between teachers and School Leadership which in turn support situated school trust.
Further investigation and implementation of the Snowden and Boone (2007) framework (see Leader’s Framework for Decision Making (Snowden & Boone 2007) to support staff to feel professionally safe and encouraged to try new teaching methods is recommended. Finally, articulating staff role obligations and expectations may help support staff to meet expected responsibilities and thus support workplace reliability and trust. Not only do School Leadership members support a climate of meeting commitments, they also provide clear timelines to support all staff to meet individual and collective responsibilities. Meeting role obligations, it is expected, will support trustworthiness and confidence across the school. These tentative theories suggest ways trust may be further implemented, particularly during times of rapid staff change, at the Vivaldi School.

### 5.6.3 For further research

This study has synthesised its findings and presented four conclusions (see section 5.5 Conclusions). From these conclusions, a number of theory and methodology questions have emerged. Implications for further research are presented below.

#### 5.6.3.1 Theory

Implications of theory are couched in terms of investigating the moral implications of the rights and obligations of Role trust and collective School trust within an emerging Australian multicultural context. Cultural assumptions and expectations impact on individual’s perceptions of role trust and School trust. A recent message by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Chris Bowen, and Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship, Kate Lundy, in The people of Australia: Australia’s multicultural policy (2011). “The policy addresses the importance of the economic and social benefits of diversity, as
well as our need to balance the rights and obligations of all who live here.” With this
backdrop, the implications for further theoretical research are listed below to:

- Identify how these tentative trust theories help school communities respond to the
  changing international cultural landscape.
- Design research that will further investigate conclusion, section 5.5.4, School
  Leadership with trust is at the heart of school change.
- Explore the connections between trust levels and student performance and
  learning. Apply mixed methods and a positivist quantitative research method to
  test the theories developed in this project.
- Compare further research with established School Leadership approaches, such as
  Pedagogical and Transformational leadership, with a specific focus on trust.
- Investigate inclusive School Leadership practices that generate staff, student and
  parents’ feelings of emotional and physical safety within this diverse multicultural
  landscape.
- Generate new understandings about Gender identity in relation to Situated trust
  and School trust.
- Examine ways of identifying and fostering collective trust or institution trust.
- Investigate effective ways to develop strong school–parent relationships, school–
  community partnerships and engage vulnerable families. This may include
  describing the quality of social interactions and the type of parent engagement that
  builds and sustains parent trust.

5.6.3.2 Methodology

Within the backdrop of school improvement (OECD et al. 2011) the Australian Government
calls for measurable data that can show learning outcomes’ gains. Lincoln et al. (2011,
p. 103) posit that at a methodological level, it is suggested that the richness of
constructivist research can enhance precision of positivistic research. In addition to this, Lincoln et al. suggested that cultures are not only real systems of beliefs and values, but are also outcomes of social constructions of participants. Considering these points, and in relation to this research, the following methodological implications are listed to:

- Investigate mixed method research to develop assessment instruments that assist with the development of a School trust continuum.
- Develop a School Leadership Decision Making Framework.
- Design a generic school framework that identifies and records the multitude of rights and responsibilities school members hold. Understanding this will enable school leaders to develop a framework that reflects their community’s needs.
- Ensure that school enhances and enables conditions that position the school members to enact situated trust are further researched and developed as a school leader’s resource.
- Design methodology that captures trust indicators and ways to promote them in urban and remote Indigenous communities. Hence building social capital as well as advancing wellbeing and learning outcomes.

In conclusion, this study has identified Situated trust, Role trust, and School trust as tentative theories that directly inform practice, grounded in empirical data. Generated from the findings and conclusions these tentative theories suggest that trust is situated in time, place and people; trust is a component of school culture; and; trust is based on role rights and obligations. Extensive further investigation and testing is required to confirm these early theories. However, conclusions and the implications for policy, practice, and further research presented in this thesis provide a start to operationalising these significant findings. The role of trust in all schools is widely recognised by academics, governments, administrators of education departments, and the general public as important. However,
recognition is only the beginning. Unless people in positions of power do more than just
name trust in documents, there will be little change. Therefore this study provides a basis
for a practical strategy for change processes in schools to develop trust using this situated
trust approach. Cultural change begins with knowledge. To transport the role of trust from
a platitude to a fully implemented model for schools, will require strategic planning by our
organisations that lead the educational community at the national level. When there is
development in these areas, staff and students can expect a safer learning environment
and higher student academic achievement results.
References


Australian Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2002, Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Studies, AIATSIS, Canberra.


Cameron, KS, Quinn, RE & Quinn, KS 2011, Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: based on the competing values framework, 3rd edn, JosseyBass, San Fransisco, CA.


Castelfranchi, C & Falcone, R 2010, Trust theory: A sociocognitive and computational model, J. Wiley, Chichester, West Sussex, UK.


SCHOOL TRUST: SITUATED TO MAXIMISE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT


Denzin, NK 2009, *Qualitative inquiry under fire: Toward a new paradigm dialogue*, Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA.


SCHOOL TRUST: SITUATED TO MAXIMISE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT


Donnelly, K 2004, *Why our schools are failing*, Duffy & Snellgrove, Potts Point, NSW.


SCHOOL TRUST: SITUATED TO MAXIMISE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT


Graham, TA 1971, Essence of decision explaining the Cuban missile crisis, Little, Brown, Boston.


Hanushek, E 2005, Economic outcomes and school quality, Education Policy Series, International Academy of Education & International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO.


SCHOOL TRUST: SITUATED TO MAXIMISE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT


Jayyusi, L 1984, Categorization and the moral order, Routledge & Keegan Paul, Boston, MA.


Killinger, B 2010, Integrity: Doing the right thing for the right reason, 2nd edn, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal; Ithaca.

Kochanek, JR 2005, Building trust for better schools: Research based practices, Corwin Press, CA.


Lincoln, YS & Guba, EG 1985, Naturalistic inquiry, SAGE Publications, Beverly Hills, CA.


Louden, W 2005, In teachers’ hands: Effective literacy teaching practices in the early years of schooling, Edith Cowan University, Australian Dept. of Education Science and Training, Mount Lawley, WA.


Marty, ME 2010, Building cultures of trust, W.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
Marzano, RJ, Waters, T & McNulty, BA 2005, \textit{School leadership that works from research to results}, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and McREL, Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, Alexandria, VA.


Merriam, SB 2009, \textit{Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation}, Qualitative research and case study applications in education, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.


Appendices


Newmann, FM & Wehlage, GG 1995, Successful school restructuring: A report to the public and educators, Centre on Organisation and Restructuring of Schools, Madison, WI.


Schein, EH 2004, Organizational culture and leadership, 3rd edn, San Francisco, CA.


—— 2010, Organizational culture and leadership, 4th edn, JosseyBass, San Francisco.


Silverman, D 1998, Harvey Sacks: Social science and conversation analysis, Oxford University, New York, NY.


—— 2011, Critical pedagogy for social justice, Continuum, New York, NY.


List of Acronyms

ACACA  Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities
ACARA  Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACDE  Australian Council of Deans of Education
ACER  Australian Council for Educational Research
ACT  Australian Capital Territory
AEEYSOC  Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee
AIATSIS  Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AIEW  Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker
AITSL  Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership
ALGA  Australian Local Government Association
ANAO  Australian National Audit Office
CCSR  Consortium on Chicago School Research
CDU  Charles Darwin University
COAG  Council of Australian Governments
CRC  COAG Reform Council
DEET  Department of Employment, Education and Training
DET  Department of Education and Training
DEEWR  Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EM  Ethnomethodology
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
HREC  Human Research Ethics Committee
ICSEA  Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
IRG  Indigenous Reference Group
MCA  Membership Category Analysis
MCD  Membership Categorisation Device
MCEECDYA  The Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs
**NAPLAN**  National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy

**NEA**  National Education Agreement

**NT**  Northern Territory

**NTPS**  Northern Territory Public Service

**OECD**  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**OH&S**  Occupational Health and Safety

**PD**  Professional Development

**PISA**  Programme for International Student Assessment

**PSEMA**  Public Sector Employment and Management Act

**PSPI**  Parent School Partnerships Initiative

**SES**  Socioeconomic Status

**SPIF**  School Performance Improvement Frameworks

**SRG**  School Reference Group

**SRP**  Standardised Relational Pairs

**TIMSS**  Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

**TQNP**  Teacher Quality National Partnership

**TRB**  Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory

**VEGPSP**  Values Education Good Practice Schools Project
Appendices

Appendix 1  Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee approval to conduct research

  1.1 New proposal

  1.2 Renewal clearance

Appendix 2  Department of Employment, Education and Training approval to conduct research

Appendix 3  School Hand (five values and motto)

Appendix 4  Y Chart (looks like, sounds like, feels like)

Appendix 5  Conversation Transcription Conventions

Appendix 6  Leader’s Framework for Decision Making (Snowden & Boone 2007)

Appendix 7  Information sheet, consent form and interview schedule

  7.1 Plain Language Statement (Information for Parents and Guardians)

  7.2 Plain Language Statement (for adults)

  7.3 Informed consent for parents to permit their child to be interviewed

  7.4 Informed consent for adults to be interviewed

  7.5 Interview schedule

Appendix 8  Go to the Source—Staff Agreement
Appendix 1

Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics approval to conduct research

New proposal

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE

NEW PROPOSAL

HEC REFERENCE: H06094

PROJECT TITLE: What is trust? A case study of a school community

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR(S): Ms Jenny Robinson

The fast-tracking subcommittee of the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee has considered your project.

The Committee is satisfied that the research proposed in this project conforms with the general principles set out in the current National Health and Medical Research Council regulations, and to the policy of the Charles Darwin University.

It should be noted that data must be stored securely on campus. Storage in a central facility (with limited access if necessary) is available. Researchers should address any queries concerning data storage to their relevant faculty.

Expiry date: 14/12/2007

Please Note: A Final Report is due on completion of this project, or if the project extends beyond the expiry date, ethics clearance must be renewed before it expires.

APPROVED

Chair, CDU Human Research Ethics Committee

Dated 29/1/07

cc: Supervisor

Research Office, Casuarina Campus, Ph. 08 8946 6400 Fax: 08 8946 7109 Email: Fiona.steere@cdu.edu.au
Renewal of Clearance

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE REPORT

RENEWAL OF CLEARANCE

PROJECT REFERENCE: H06094

PROJECT TITLE: What is trust? A case study of a school community

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR(S): Jenny Robinson

The Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee has considered the above mentioned renewal application.

The Committee is satisfied that the research proposed in this project conform with the general principles set out in the current National Health and Medical Research Council regulations, and with the policy of the Charles Darwin University.

The Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee has therefore approved renewal of clearance for your project for a further twelve months.

It should be noted that data may be stored (with limited access if necessary) at a central facility at the University. Researchers should address any queries concerning data storage to their relevant faculty.

EXPIRY DATE: 23 November 2008

Chair, CDU Human Research Ethics Committee

Dated: 7/12/07

Research Office, Casuarina Campus, Ph: 08 8946 6498 Fax: 08 8946 7199 Email: cdu-ethics@cdu.edu.au
Appendix 2

Department of Employment, Education and Training approval to conduct research

---

Dear Mrs. Robinson,


Your application to conduct the above research is approved, subject to the willingness of Primary School students, parents and staff to participate. You may notify them of the approval, however, the final decision regarding participation in the study rests with them.

It should be noted by you that the three General Managers who were asked to consider your application all expressed concern that being the school and community you are researching may result in some respondents feeling compromised and unable to give full and frank feedback.

We hope that this research project is successful and look forward to receiving the final report.

Yours sincerely,

IAN POLLOCK
DIRECTOR

\[ December 2006 \]
Appendix 3

School Hand (five values and motto)
Appendix 4

*Y Chart (looks like, sounds like, feels like)*
Appendix 5

Conversational Transcription Conventions

Modified and adapted from Housley and Fitzgerald (2002, pp. 82–3).

Transcript notation for examples that may include

I = interviewer
P = parent
S = Student
St = Staff

The following conventions, developed by Gail Jefferson, were used for the transcripts. These conventions denote lapses in time, overlapping talk, pace and in some instances pitch, pronunciation and stress.

(1.0) Numbers in parentheses denote the approximate duration of pauses or gaps between utterances in seconds or tenths of a second.
(.) Point in parentheses indicates a “micro-pause” of less than two-tenths of a second.
(cough) Letters, words or activities in parentheses represent sounds, words or activities that are distinct or difficult to locate to a particular interlocutor(s).
[ ] Square brackets mark the points where talk overlaps.
(::) Full colons denote an extension in the vowel or consonant sound in the utterance of a word.
CAPITALS as we said Capitals indicate specific emphasis and change in volume.
= Equals sign identifies a “latching” between utterances, whereby utterances follow each other rapidly after a preceding utterance.
Appendix 6

Leader’s Framework for Decision Making (Snowden & Boone 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTEXT’S CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>LEADER’S JOB</th>
<th>DANGER SIGNALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SIMPLE</td>
<td>Repeating patterns and consistent events; Clear cause-and-effect relationships evident to everyone; right answer exists; Known knowns; Fact-based management</td>
<td>Sense, categorize, respond; Ensure that proper processes are in place; Delegate; Use best practices; Communicate in clear, direct ways; Understand that extensive interactive communication may not be necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLICATED</td>
<td>Expert diagnosis required; Cause-and-effect relationships discoverable but not immediately apparent to everyone; more than one right answer possible; Known unknowns; Fact-based management</td>
<td>Sense, analyze, respond; Create panels of experts Listen to conflicting advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLEX</td>
<td>Flux and unpredictability; No right answers; emergent instructive patterns; Unknown unknowns; Many competing ideas; A need for creative and innovative approaches; Pattern-based leadership</td>
<td>Probe, sense, respond; Create environments and experiments that allow patterns to emerge; Increase levels of interaction and communication; Use methods that can help generate ideas: Open up discussion (as through large group methods); set barriers; stimulate attractors; encourage dissent and diversity; and manage starting conditions and monitor for emergence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAOTIC</td>
<td>High turbulence; No clear cause-and-effect relationships, so no point in looking for right answers; Unknowns; Many decisions to make and no time to think; High tension; Pattern-based leadership</td>
<td>Act, sense, respond; Look for what works instead of seeking right answers; Take immediate action to reestablish order (command and control); Provide clear, direct communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Snowden & Boone 2007, p. 4)
Appendix 7

Information sheet, consent form and interview schedule

7.1 Plain Language Statement (Information for Parents and Guardians)

I am currently studying part time at the Charles Darwin University for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). My area of interest is about “trust”. My topic title is, “What is Trust? A case study of a school community”.

My research involves finding out the views of students, parents and staff about “trust”. I want to know what people think trust is and how we construct it at the Vivaldi School.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in the study, I would talk with your child, at a time convenient to him or her, about their views on trust. I am interested to know what he or she thinks trust is and how it is demonstrated in this school community.

The people I am inviting to participate in this research study are all connected to this school.

I understand that the ownership of Aboriginal knowledge and cultural heritage is retained by the informant and this will be acknowledged in research findings and in the dissemination of the research.

The findings of this project will be included in my thesis and may also be reported at conferences or included in an article or book for publication, either in print or electronic form. The findings may also be forwarded to relevant or interested organisations. The completed thesis will be available at the CDU library for public reading.

Confidentiality will be maintained by using pseudonyms for participants in both the transcripts of the interviews and the thesis. I will use secure storage for the data and password protection on my computer. The interview data will be kept for possible use in another project.

Your child’s participation in the project is voluntary. He or she is free to participate or not as they wish, and free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the study at any time, without prejudice.

This project has ethical approval from Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee and DEET to go ahead.

The consent form is on the back. Please contact me if you wish to discuss this further on 0423 776 493.
Appendix 7

7.2 Palin Language Statement (for adults)

Plain English Information Sheet

Title of Project
What is Trust? A case study of a school community

Researcher
Jenny Robinson, PhD student, Charles Darwin University

Charles Darwin University (CDU) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) No
As part of my PhD research I wish to find out the views of a number of students, parents, and teachers about trust. I want to know what people think about trust.

If you agree to participate, I would make an appointment to talk with you, at a time and place convenient to you, about your views on trust. I am interested to know what you think trust and how it is demonstrated in this school community.

The people I am inviting to participate in this research study are all connected to this school.

I understand that the ownership of Aboriginal knowledge and cultural heritage is retained by the informant and this will be acknowledged in research findings and in the dissemination of the research.

The findings of this project will be included in my thesis and may also be reported at conferences or included in an article or book for publication, either in print or electronic form. The findings may also be forwarded to relevant or interested organisations. The completed thesis will be available at the CDU library for public reading.

As you will be aware, Northern Territory presents many challenges for educators. This project is intended to contribute to the growing body of research in this area and to inform future policy direction and practice.

Confidentiality will be maintained by using pseudonyms for participants in both the transcripts of the interviews and the thesis. I will use secure storage for the data to the and password protection on my computer. The interview data will be kept for possible use in another project.

Your participation in the project is voluntary. You are free to participate of not as you wish, and free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the study at any time, without prejudice.

This project has ethical approval from Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee to go ahead.

If you have any complaints about the way you have been treated during this study, or a query that the researcher, supervisor or staff member in charge has not been able to satisfy, you may write to: The Secretary Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, Charles Darwin University, Darwin NT 0909, Phone: 8946 6548.
Appendix 7

7.3  **Informed consent for parents to permit their child to be interviewed**

RESEARCH PERMISSION FORM

I consent to allow my child ................................................................. to be interviewed by Jenny Robinson, a PhD student at the Charles Darwin University in, and I understand that the purpose of the research is to investigate:

What is trust? A case study of a school community

I acknowledge

1  That my child’s interview transcript will be coded and my name and address kept separately from it.

2  Any information that I provide, or my child provides, will not be released in an identified form.

3  Aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic journals.

4  Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and upon my authorisation.

5  That I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used. I understand that my child will be permitted to withdraw his/her participation in the interview at any time during the study.

6  “I understand that the ownership of Aboriginal knowledge and cultural heritage is retained by the informant and this will be acknowledged in research findings and in the dissemination of the research”.

Child’s surname: ..................................................................................Given name: .................................................................

SIGNATURE OF PARENT: ................................................................. DATE: .................................................................

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO SCHOOL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
Appendix 7

7.4  Informed consent for adults to be interviewed

RESEARCH PERMISSION FORM

I ...................................................................................................................... of..................................................................................................................

consent to be interviewed by Jenny Robinson, a PhD student at the Charles Darwin University. I understand that the purpose of the research is to investigate:

What is trust? A case study of a school community

I acknowledge

1  That my interview transcript will be coded and my name and address kept separately from it.

2  Any information that I provide, will not be released in an identified form.

3  Aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic journals.

4  Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and upon my authorisation.

5  That I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

6  I understand that the ownership of Aboriginal knowledge and cultural heritage is retained by the informant and this will be acknowledged in research findings and in the dissemination of the research.

7  That I have read the Plain Language Statement that explains all aspects of the research, including my rights regarding confidentiality and participation. I have had an opportunity to discuss these aspects with the researcher, Jenny Robinson.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT: ................................................................. DATE: ...........................................
Appendix 7:

7.5 Interview schedule

Because this research is theory building, the kinds of questions asked will vary slightly with the participants and setting. The interview schedule below is what is known as a semi-structured interview schedule, whose purpose is to generate information through a structured yet conversational style of interview. Following the main question, probes questions follow to show the ways in which follow-up information may be elicited.

Semi-structured questions for adults:

1. Tell me about what you understand by the word “trust”?
   a. What do you mean by it?
   b. What does trust look like?
   c. What does trust sound like?
   d. What does trust feel like in a school?
   e. Can you tell me some stories about when trust was important to you in this school?

2. How do you think a trustworthy school environment is encouraged?
   a. To build a trustworthy school environment, what are the preconditions for students, teachers, and parents?
   b. What about the Hand?
   c. What about the Tribes agreements?
   d. What about the staff agreement?
   e. What are the outcomes of a trusting school environment?
   f. Stories to illustrate?

3. How do the various people in positions of authority at school influence a trusting environment?
   a. Does the school Principal influence trust?
   b. What role do students play?
   c. Parents?
   d. DET and policy?
   e. Who else is involved?
   f. Stories to illustrate?
**SCHOOL TRUST: SITUATED TO MAXIMISE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

*Semi-structured questions for children*

1. Are there kids in the school that you trust?
2. How do you know you trust them?
3. What is trust then?
4. Have you always trusted those kids?
5. Are there some kids that you don’t trust? Tell me why not?
6. Are there adults in the school that you trust? Why do you trust them?
7. Can the school help kids trust each other? Tell me about that.
8. What can teachers do to help kids trust each other? Can the Principal or Assistant Principal help?
9. Have you had an experience where you have not felt safe at school? Is that about trust or distrust?
10. Any more stories to tell me?
Appendix 8

Go to the Source—Staff Agreement

At the Vivaldi School we:

- Take the problem to the source.
- Take a trusted colleague if we are unable to take the problem to the source alone.
- Seek help from elsewhere in the school, together if the issue is not resolved.